Exegetical Paper
John 2:1-11: The Wedding Feast at Cana

I. Introduction

In this exegetical paper I will be taking a look at the Wedding Feast that occurred in Cana as documented by John’s Gospel in the second chapter, verses 1 to 11. The account of the wedding feast may seem insignificant at first glance, but upon careful reading one discovers an overwhelming amount of spiritual significance to Jesus’ ministry and His purpose in coming to earth as presented throughout this passage and in the following pages of this pericope.

The account begins by telling us that, “On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples,” (Jn 2:1-2). His mother is made aware that the wine being served at the wedding feast has just run out. This is a great embarrassment for the wedding party, because wedding feasts are a major social occasion, and to run out of wine is just poor planning. Not wanting the bride’s family to suffer any embarrassment, Mary goes to her Son and tells Him, “They have no wine,”(Jn 2:3). Jesus’ response is negative, but then His actions demonstrate a relationship seen throughout scripture between the King and His mother, the Queen.

Mary then turns to the servants standing near by and tells them, “Do whatever he tells you,” (Jn 2:5). Jesus then begins to give them instructions and the servants do exactly what He says. Do you suppose there is a spiritual significance here for us? When Jesus then tells one of the servants to draw some out and take it to the head steward, we read that it is the best wine ever
tasted, and instead of being embarrassed, the groom is now praised, thus also the bride’s family shares in that praise. What is significant about the wine and the fact it was the best ever tasted?

What is the spiritual significance to Jesus choosing a wedding feast as a location for His first public miracle? Is there any significance to the jars He used or the amount of water that was in them? Is it possible that there is more to this story than meets the eye? I suggest the answer is, “Yes”.
II. Historical Analysis

The cultural and historical significance of the Wedding Feast at Cana involves three different aspects. The first aspect is the day on which the feast is celebrated and its importance. The second aspect involves the traditions surrounding a Jewish marriage feast and how Jesus’ involvement in this type of feast is intimately connected with His kingdom. The third aspect involves the vessels used in a wedding feast and the significant role they played in Jesus’ first public miracle.

The first aspect involves the day on which the celebration of this wedding took place. We know from earlier accounts found in John 1:35-49, that just before the wedding feast on day one, Jesus travels throughout the region gathering Andrew, John, Peter, James, and then on day two Philip and Nathaniel. It is in the following chapter that John then tells us, “On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee,” (John 2:1), and that Jesus and His mother was there along with Jesus’ disciples (ref John 2:2).

On a brief side note, scholars have long since speculated why Jesus was able to bring new people to a wedding feast that undoubtedly required an invitation. William Hendriksen gives the following two possibilities. As the distance between Cana and Nazareth are not too far apart, thus the distance Jesus had to travel would not be too great or too out of His way. Upon arriving in Nazareth, He would have received the invitation notice from His mother, and that invitation would most likely include “all who were with [H]im”. The second possibility Hendriksen lists involves Nathaniel, who was from Cana, probably knew the bridegroom or as, “Some are of the opinion that he was a relative of the bridegroom,” would have been authorized to extend
invitations to his own close friends with the blessing of the bridegroom. For such was the custom in those days.”¹ To return to what day the wedding feast was celebrated.

This third day’s significance reflects three things. First, on the third day of creation, “God pronounced things “good” twice…Therefore to the Jewish people, the third 3rd day is known as a day of double blessing, and is still the preferred day for weddings in modern Israel.² Stephan K. Ray notes in his commentary, “It may, in fact, refer to the beginning of a new creation, a new week of creation.”³ When a man and woman join their lives in marriage, they are becoming that new creation, they are becoming one flesh (ref Gen 2:24).

Secondly, the tradition of a Jewish wedding feast involves seven days of celebration (ref Tobit 11:19), and usually, as Stephen K. Ray notes, takes place at the bridegrooms house and includes many close relatives and friends⁴. Ray also notes in the same paragraph that the Head Steward, who in John’s Gospel receives the first taste of the miraculous wine, is usually also a close friend. This gives rise to Mary’s role in telling Jesus that the wine had run out. Both Ray and Hendrickson believe that Mary was in fact a close friend or relative to the family of the wedding party. Thus she would have been involved in the preparation of the food and drink. Also in Jewish circles, both today and yesterday, the use of wine is quite significant. Stephen K. Ray notes this in particular when he speaks of the Aramaic meaning, mistita, or drink festival, “…with which accords the rabbinical dictum: ‘Where there is no wine, there is no joy’…”

⁴ Ibid., 74.
lack of wine was not only an embarrassment for the bridegroom, but also a disruption of the feast, and it rendered the family open to a lawsuit.”

The intimate connection comes when Jesus is referred to by John the Baptist as the “bridegroom” (Jn 4:30) and later when, Jesus uses wine to establish the New Covenant. Just as at the wedding feast in Cana when Jesus provides an abundance of new wine, so too will He give of Himself, body-blood-soul-and divinity, for the salvation of many in the forms of bread and wine.

The last aspect involves the vessels used in Jewish wedding feasts, and in particular the jugs of water used for purification (see Numbers 19:11-22). The text tells us, “Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons, (John 2:6). That is a lot of water if one does the math. There are six stone jars, each able to hold 20 to 30 gallons of water – 30 gallons X 6 = 180 gallons of water! The historical significance demonstrates that there are a large number of guests attending the wedding if 180 gallons of water is used to purify them upon entering the feast, as was custom. This number will also serve later as the sign of Jesus’ gift and His abounding Love for mankind. As Stephen K. Ray notes, “The water in the jars, used for Jewish purification rituals, will be transformed into a ‘sign’…in and through which the doxa [glory] will be revealed.” Purification began on the outside for the Jews, but soon that purification will be brought inside, to the heart and soul of a person. The stone jars will soon become clay vessels who will receive a ‘new wine’ in them, as we also become new vessels made for a new covenant, and thus are made into a new creation as mentioned in the first aspect.

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5 Ibid., 76.
Thus these three aspects play a very important role in the establishing of the historical context in which Jesus’ first public miracle, His first gift of love, is given to us. With this event, we begin a journey of faith into Jesus, the Christ, starting in Cana with His first public miracle.
III. Grammatical Analysis

John’s use of language is, I believe, a bit more significant than the synoptic Gospel writers in that his Gospel account focuses so much more on the *spiritual significance* of events rather than just recounting the historical significance. Yet, John’s presentation of the Wedding Feast (*Syntactical*) is very systematically laid out. There is a clear sense of time and the order of the events follow each other smoothly. While John’s use of several Semitic Idioms (*Lexical*) like “woman” – when Jesus refers to His mother, Mary – help the reader to better appreciate the language used at the time of Christ, and gives the reader a better understanding of the *spiritual significance* of this passage.

A. *Syntactical*: John begins by telling us it was the third day and there was a wedding feast (ref Jn 2:1). He then gives the reader a glimpse into the wedding feast telling us that Jesus was there with His first disciples and His mother, Mary, was there too, (ref Jn2:2,1). Mary is somehow connect with the organization of the feast because she notices when they run out of wine and tells her Son, “They have no more wine,” (Jn 2:3). John tells us Jesus responds, and not too favorably, but Mary still turns to the servants and tells them, “Do whatever he tells you,” (Jn 2:5). By reading that, we see how systematically John wrote down the facts. This happened and then this happened. This was the day of the wedding feast, and here are some of the guests who were invited. John is very *clear cut* as to the details. He continues to tell us that Jesus gave a few simple instructions to the servants and the servants followed His instructions *to the letter*. When the water is drawn out and given to the head steward, most likely in a cup, it is here that we find out what extraordinary event has just taken place. Still, John does not embellish the facts, he just clearly states what happened. The head steward tastes the wine and calls over the bridegroom to compliment him on his choice of saving the good wine for last, (ref Jn 2:9-10).
As a result, Jesus’ disciples believe in Him, (ref Jn 2:11). It is in the use of the common day Hebrew Idioms that John begins to express the *spiritual significance* of the whole event.

B. *Lexical:* First, the use of the word, “woman”, which many misguided souls had thought rude and inconsiderate of Christ, is in reality a sign of deep respect that will reappear later in John’s Gospel, (see Jn 19:26-27). Stephen Ray offers some insight into the word and its usage during the time of Christ when he states, “To understand Jesus’ manner of addressing his Mother, we must take into account the idioms of the Semitic languages,” (Ray, *St. John’s Gospel*, 78). Woman is literally to be translated as “Lady” and was commonly used during the time of Jesus. Its use was one of great respect and politeness that, “On the Cross Jesus will use…with great affection and veneration,” (Ibid.,78). Another use of an idiom occurs when Jesus responds with, “…what have you to do with me,” (Jn 2:4). This literally translates from its idiomatic use as, “What to me and thee?” This is another example of Jesus’ respect for His mother. As St. Peter Chrysologus, Archbishop of Ravenna states, “That He greatly venerated His mother, we know from St. Luke, who tells us that He was subject unto His parents,”

Therefore, this particular idiom demonstrates “…the free consent of one party to the expressed will of another…since Jesus promptly complies with Mary’s request (2:7-8) and Mary never wavers in her confidence that Jesus will respond favorably to her petition (2:5),” The *spiritual significance* is made very clear in the duty and honor Mary holds with her Son.

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10 “And when he says to her *ti emoi kai soi,* literally “What [is there] to me and to you?”” (Ibid., 174).


The final words of this passage, “My hour has not yet come,” (Jn 2:4), also suggests something more important, some sort of *spiritual significance* beyond an ordinary hour, indicating that Jesus is conscious of the fact, “…that he was accomplishing a task entrusted to him by the Father, every detail of which had been definitely marked off in the eternal decree, so that for each act there was a stipulated moment,”¹⁴ This statement is further supported in John 5:19, where Jesus tells the Jews He can do nothing apart from the Father, and is thus a significant reminder to us that, *we too*, can also do *nothing* apart from Him. Thus Jesus waits a moment more for the appointed time of His first miracle, one that will not, “…by any independent or premature action appear to be seeking his own glory…”¹⁵ but will demonstrate the Glory of His Father in Heaven who has given the Son an example to imitate (ref John 5:19-21), that will bring about the Glory of His Son when God raises Him on the third day.

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IV. Rhetorical Analysis

The genre and structure of John’s Gospel is also quite unique just as his use of grammar. The genre is not allegorical or poetical, instead John lays out the events in an orderly fashion, relating them as they happened, with no embellishment, no ‘thunder-claps’, just simply stating the facts. This makes the genre of John’s account of the Wedding Feast at Cana, Historical. The significance of these events is made clear by the chosen literary devices and structure used by John. In particular is his use of chiasm to emphasize the spiritual significance of the historical events. We begin with the genre.

The recounting of historical events as they happened tells us the type of genre John chose to use, historical. At yet, John adds a deeper understanding to these events, and as Stephen K. Ray notes, “John does not give us “parables” in the strict sense…instead he recounts numerous historical stories in such a way that they serve as parables by inviting us to discover deep spiritual truth.”\(^\text{16}\) Which is the running theme established in the Historical and Grammar sections; John speaks of events in light of their spiritual significance. This is made even more obvious when we take a look at the structure of this passage.

John helps us to focus on the spiritual with the way he structures this passage. It is a form of inclusion alluded to in Ray’s book called chiasm\(^\text{17}\), “…[it is used] in order to emphasize and frame the events and truths…[found in] parallel phrases escalating to a middle theme [for further] emphasis[is].”\(^\text{18}\) He sites some examples of this use of inclusion by pointing out the way John makes obvious Mary’s importance in her Son’s ministry. Mary is present at


\(^{17}\) “Chiasm is a development of inclusion…[and] extends the balancing of the first and the last by balancing the second and the fourth [thus a-b-c-b-a]…It is used by John,…[and] is the key to the structure of his Gospel as a whole, and to the structure of each individual sequence and section.” Ray, St. John’s Gospel: A Bible Study Guide and Commentary for Individuals and Groups. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 72 (footnote 1).

Jesus’ first public miracle and she is present at His last saving act, His death on the Cross. Her being present at these two events gives rise to Mary’s presence as vital to Jesus. How else could His disciples develop the love necessary for the woman who was to become the Mother of the Church? In further retrospect, how are we, in today’s Church, to know the significance of the Mother of Christ had it not been made manifest in the scriptures? None of the other Gospel writers give such an account, even though Luke’s Gospel does site the Annunciation and the Nativity of Jesus, he does not mention Mary again. John’s Gospel is unique in this style of writing. It is a result of this use of inclusion that we, and all who read John’s account, can come to understand the important spiritual significance of the events beyond their historical accounts.

This style of inclusion occurs again when Mary is linked directly with the disciples of Jesus, as noted by Brodie. He states, “The opening verses (1:1-2) contain two phrases which link Jesus first with his mother and then with his disciples…The literary structure in these verses is such that it suggests a balance between the ‘mother’ and ‘his disciples’…[as the scene] begins with the mother of Jesus (2:1) and ends with ‘his disciples’ (2:11).”¹⁹ Thus the disciples’ presence at Jesus’ first miracle and the involvement of His mother connects the reader to understand that both she and them are absolutely necessary for instructing us in the full significance of Jesus’ gift of changing the water into wine.

The use of literary indicators are noted by Brodie as, “…specific details with suggest a transition from one scene or part to the next.”²⁰ This is accomplished by the repeating of the word, “there” – Greek translation “ēsan de ekei”²¹. It occurs twice, once at the beginning of verse 6 when referring to the water pitchers, and then again when referring to the Mother of

²⁰ Ibid., 171.
²¹ Ibid., 171.
Jesus at the end of verse 1, “The use of so small a word as *ekie*, “there”, may at first seem insignificant...[but] its sudden repetition…when preceded by the verb to be, acts as an initial indicator that perhaps the scene should be divided accordingly.”\(^{22}\) Giving the reader a sense that a mystery is about to be revealed, the mystery concerning Christ’s love for us. Especially when it is brought to fulfillment at the Eucharist and then at the Cross.

As pointed out by Hendriksen, “In thorough keeping with this fact is the following clause: **and manifested his glory.** Christ stands revealed as...One who honors...marriage...Christ is himself the Bridegroom...One who bestows his gifts lavishly...all his gifts are the very best...One whose infinite love is made effective by his...infinite power...One who...is the Son of God...full of grace and glory...**And his disciples believed in him**...[their belief] strengthened by this sign\(^ {23}\),” allows the reader to understand the true significance of Jesus’ miracle, how it is intimately connect to the Kingdom of Heaven, reminding us we are the Bride and He is the Bridegroom and, “there is created a sense of waiting and expectation\(^ {24}\),” as the Old Covenant passes away and the New Covenant begins in Jesus Christ. This is the *spiritual significance* of the sign Jesus performed at the wedding in Cana.


V. Canonical Analysis

The two steps of analysis that I chose to focus on for this section of this paper are: One, on how this text relates to other material found within the Gospel of John, and: Two, what theme is found throughout of John’s Gospel that begins within this account.

As already alluded to in the prior sections, John’s Gospel focus concentrates on the *spiritual significance* of the events that occur. Occur to whom? Occur to Jesus, the Son of Mary, but also the Son of God. When Jesus turns the water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana, He says something about Himself in and thru the use of a *sign*. As Hendriksen points out, “[This] term is used more often by John than by the other Gospel-writers. It indicates a miracle viewed as a *proof of divine authority and majesty*…,” which is again addressed with John’s account of the *Last Supper* when Jesus will once again use wine as a symbol, but this time as His own blood.

As Hendriksen defines what a *sign* is, he states, “…the *sign* points away from itself to the One who performs it… a work of power in the physical realm, illustrates a principle that is operative in the *spiritual* realm…which takes place in the sphere of creation [and] points away from itself to the sphere of redemption.” The multiplication of loaves that take place with the feeding of the multitudes, the opening of the blind man’s eyes, the raising of Lazarus, they are other examples of a *sign* that points to Jesus and gives testimony of His authority over all things. As John the Baptist declared to his disciples, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:29). Brodie lends support to Hendriksen’s understanding of sign by stating, “A *sēmeion* [Greek = sign] is any significant action…the fact that the gospel refers to the Cana incident as a sign…indicates that it

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is the meaning...that is really important."\(^{28}\) This brings us to two very important themes found in the Gospel of John and connects directly to the whole of scripture, obedience and service.

God works His miracles through His instruments. This occurs repeatedly throughout the OT accounts beginning with Moses, who lead the Israelites out of Egypt (see Ex 13), followed by the prophets, all of them preached when God asked and many were killed for their preaching, then on to King David, who brought the tabernacle back to Jerusalem, and his son Solomon, who built the Temple as the dwelling place for the Lord and that tabernacle. Coming to completion with the birth of God’s only begotten Son who was obedient unto death, even death on a cross (ref Phil 2:8). Jesus, too, works His miracles with the help of others. None so obvious as when He turned water into wine. How was Jesus able to accomplish this? By the intercession of His mother, Mary, who told the servants, “Do whatever He tells you,” (John 2:5), Jesus begins. The servants then follow thru by doing what Jesus tells them to do. He says, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. (John 2:7), then He tells them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast." So they took it. (John 2:8). They followed Jesus’ instructions to the letter, “Thus the miracle is not in any juggling which Jesus does with the water, but in the acceptance of his word by the servants.”\(^{29}\) This theme of obedience to the words of Jesus will continue throughout John’s Gospel with His disciples also listening and then doing what He tells them to do.

Thus service also becomes a theme in John’s Gospel and will continue to reappear. Jesus reminds His disciples at the Last Supper in chapter 23, verses 12 thru 19, of the importance of serving one another, and those who later will be entrusted to their care, by following His own example. Brodie offers this final piece of insight, “...the idea of revelation, of the fact that at

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 173.
Cana Christ’s power brings into the world a manifestation of glory…it is though and in the attentive servants and disciples that the miracles happen…through their grasping of his word and of its meaning…through their response – that the revelation is fulfilled…“30 With obedience and service to God’s perfect Will, we too can experience the miracles of Jesus. As John’s Gospel demonstrates, great things happen when God works through us and with us when we become His obedient servants listening to His Word.

VI. Liturgical Analysis

After an extensive search, the only reference to the Wedding Feast at Cana was found in the liturgical cycle of readings for Year C, the second Sunday of Ordinary Time. Along with this reading is a reading from Is 62:1-5, and 1 Cor 12:4-11. Having examined each, I only find reference to marriage in Isaiah, and only towards the end.

Isaiah reads, “4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight is in her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. 5 For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” [emphasis mine]”. Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise. He is the bridegroom and His church becomes the bride. He rejoices in us and gives us an abundance of gifts.

This is where 2Corinthians comes in. It reads, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord;…” embracing John’s use of the stress of service being part of the kingdom of heaven (refer back to Canonical Section), “7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good…11 All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills,” Paul tells the church at Corinth that Christ gives generously to His bride, that is us, the Church. John stresses this also in his passage when he tells us that the wine Jesus made was of the finest quality, thus the guests at this wedding feast enjoyed the Bridegroom’s generosity, even though they did not know where the wine had come from.
VII. Magisterial Analysis

On the Magisterial side, the Wedding Feast at Cana emphasizes the dogmatic truth that Mary is the Mother of God or Theotokos (Greek). As the Mother of God, she also becomes the main intercessor or mediatrix for all of mankind with her divine Son. This places on Mary due respect and honor as demonstrated by her Son (ref John 2:7-11), and thus calls us also to pay Mary the greatest honor one can for another creature, for she is favored by God (ref Luke 1:28).

Back in AD 431, a council was called in Ephesus to address the motherhood of Mary. This motherhood would not just reflect on her, but also on her Son. If Jesus was indeed the Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of God, then Mary had to be the Mother of God. The result of the proceedings of the council was two fold. One, “Mary is truly a mother, that is, she contributed everything to be formation of the human nature of Christ that every other mother contributes to the formation of the fruit of her body.” The passage clearly states, “On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there;” (John 2:1), thus Mary is the mother of Jesus. Two, “Mary is truly the Mother of God, that is, she conceived and bore the Second Person of the Divinity, not indeed according to the Divine Nature, but according to the assumed human nature.” Jesus’ first public miracle gives beginning proof that He is the Messiah, the one prophesized to come, and yet because He was born of Mary, a human creature, so He is also a man; which tells us that Jesus, being man, also has all things human including a human nature.

31 “This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. . . Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.” CCC 969.
33 Ibid.
Mary, as His mother, plays a role in this first miracle, for as the late John Paul II tells us, “The mother of Christ presents herself as the spokeswoman of her Son’s will…her faith evokes his first ‘sign’ and helps to kindle the faith of the disciples.” John Paul II, no doubt, knew personally Mary’s role within her Son’s mission of salvation as he had a great devotion to the Mother of Our Lord. After all, he was “Peter” the Vicar of Christ’s Church. Continuing in *Mother of the Redeemer*, John Paul II comments, “In John’s text…the description of the Cana event outlines what is actually manifested as a new kind of motherhood according to the spirit and not just according to the flesh.” John Paul II begins to allude to Mary’s role as not just the mother of Jesus, but the mother of all mankind. Her Son is the New Adam so it would make sense that she would be the New Eve, the mother of all mankind, as we saw in pointed out in the Grammatical Section, para. 2, pg 1.

It is in the need of more wine at the wedding feast in Cana (John 2:3), that Mary’s role comes into play. Knowing that her Son was beginning His public ministry soon, for He brought with Him the disciples He had spent the last several days gathering (ref John 1:35-50), she knew they would need some sort of sign to believe that He is the Messiah. Trusting completely in her Son, she turns to the servants – with the disciples looking on, no doubt (ref John 2:11) – she says to them, “Do whatever He tells you.” John Paul II notes, “…this coming to the aid of human

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36 Mary gave her consent in faith at the Annunciation and maintained it without hesitation at the foot of the Cross. Ever since, her motherhood has extended to the brothers and sisters of her Son "who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties." Jesus, the only mediator, is the way of our prayer; Mary, his mother and ours, is wholly transparent to him: she "shows the way" (hodigitria), and is herself "the Sign" of the way, according to the traditional iconography of East and West. CCC 2674. See also CCC 501.
37 The Gospel reveals to us how Mary prays and intercedes in faith. At Cana, the mother of Jesus asks her son for the needs of a wedding feast; this is the sign of another feast - that of the wedding of the Lamb where he gives his body and blood at the request of the Church, his Bride. It is at the hour of the New Covenant, at the foot of the cross, that Mary is heard as the Woman, the new Eve, the true "Mother of all the living[emphasis mine]." CCC 2618.
needs means, at the same time, bringing those needs within the radius of Christ’s messianic mission and salvific power…that is to say that she acts as a mediatrix not as an outsider, but in her position as mother.”

Thus she is able to give to her Son’s mission her complete devotion by believing in Him without any doubt, providing for us a perfect model of faith that we should emulate, and thus demonstrates her concern for all the needs of mankind.

Mary’s role in the sign performed at the Wedding Feast in Cana is pivotal. As the Mother of God, who is Jesus, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, she has the unique position of interceding on our behalf with her divine Son, and as He did not refuse His mother’s request, she becomes for us a mediator with her Son, the one mediator with God the Father (ref. CCC 2674). Mary, Mother of God, Pray for us.

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VIII. Conclusion

A. Literal Sense: John’s account of the Wedding Feast at Cana is stated quite factual. He gives us details about vessels used in a Jewish wedding feast, “Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification,” (Jn 2:6). He indicates the importance of having the right amount of wine by Mary’s intervention when the wine ran out, “When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine,” (Jn 2:3), and what the typical custom concerning wine was for weddings, “When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine;"[emphasis mine] but you have kept the good wine until now,” (Jn 2:9-10). Finally the day on which the wedding feast is celebrated also bears significance with the traditions of the time, “On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee,”(Jn 2:1).

The days of a wedding feast are supported in Tobit, chapter 11, verse 19. Present day Israel also has wedding feasts still celebrated on the third day of the week and for 14 days. The use of purification vessels were first introduced in Numbers, chapter 19, verses 11-22, adhering to the Mosaic Law of which the people of Israel were under.

Wine was a commodity that all ancient people made use of. Water was scarce and certainly not good for drinking, especially since most used it for cleaning, or as for the Jews, for cleansing/purification of the hands, feet, and vessels eaten and drunk with. But in a wedding ceremony it is used to symbolize the union of the couple, and Jesus later uses it to establish His union with us in the New Covenant. This use continues today with our celebration of the Holy
Eucharist whenever the priest speaks the words of Jesus transforming the wine into His Precious Blood.

B. *The Allegorical Sense:* When Jesus makes use of the six stone vessels used for purification, He in essence *defiles* the jars by filling them with water that turned into wine, thus making the stone jars *unclean* and no longer usable for purification for the Jews. This is important. Jesus is beginning to *take away* the need for purification of the outside extremities of the body. Also, by filling the jars with an abundance of new wine Jesus gives us a *look ahead* of His bountiful goodness in the later pouring out of His own blood when He is nailed to the Cross as an innocent man. When His side is pierced, there flows out water and blood, water for baptism and blood for us to consume as a sign of the New Covenant. Jesus takes away the punishment for our sins, pours out His mercy for us all, *and* He leaves us with the abundance of His Love in the Eucharist as the wine consecrated becomes His body, **blood,** soul and divinity. With the number of times Mass is said throughout the whole world, this statement actually falls short of this reality.

C. *Moral Sense:* This leads directly into the moral sense of it is not that which is about me that can defile me, but that which comes from within me that will defile me. The ancient Hebrews who later became the Jews of Jesus’ time, believed that all that was about you that could defile you were *sins* in themselves. Today we understand that often times things we see, hear, eat, and do can lead us into great sin, but they in themselves are *not* the sin. So, if I choose to be a glutton and eat and eat and eat, it the choice I made from *within my heart* that makes gluttony the sin I have committed. Thus, if I were to rely on the great mercy of Jesus, and come to Him and receive Him with a contrite heart, I will have His love and mercy living within me.
This will change me from within and make me who God needs me to be, and so I can then bring that same love to others who He brings into my life.

D. *Anagogical Sense*: The Wedding Feast at Cana is directly connected by the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. The Wedding Feast of the Lamb will take place when His kingdom on earth is joined with His kingdom in heaven, and this passage already gives us the set up of *how it will be*. There will be an abundance of wine and festivities, “And they filled them up to the brim,” “…On the third day there was a marriage,” (Jn 2:7,1). The Mother of our Lord will be there, “…the mother of Jesus was there,” (Jn 2:1), and so will His disciples be there, “Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples,” (Jn 2:2). Jesus will be on hand to give us all an abundance of His love and mercy in the new wine of the New Covenant, ref Jn 2:7-10; and all will believe in Him and witness His divine power and glory, manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him,” (Jn 2:11). Will you be at the marriage feast, ref Matt 22:1-7? I know I will.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


PASSAGE OUTLINE:

I. Repeated Words Used in *The Wedding Feast at Cana* (Jn 2:1-11)
   a. The word **Wine**
      i. Appears 6 times in this passage
         1. *When the wine* failed,
         2. *They have no wine*
         3. *the water now become wine*
         4. *serves the good wine first*
         5. *then the poor wine*
         6. *but you have kept the good wine until now*
   b. The word **Water**
      i. Appears 3 time in this passage but is implied twice
         1. *Fill the jars with water*
         2. *tasted the water*
         3. *who had drawn the water knew*
      ii. Implied meaning of **Water**
          1. *Jewish rites of purification*
             a. Only used **water**
          2. *filled them up to the brim*
             a. up to the brim with **water**
          3. *draw some out*
             a. Some referring to **water**

II. Order of Speakers
    a. Mary, Mother of Jesus
        i. Informs Jesus of the situation, “They have no wine.”
    b. Jesus responds to His mother
        i. *And Jesus said to her, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”*
    c. Mary then gives instruction to the servants
        i. *"Do whatever he tells you."
    d. Jesus then gives Instruction to the servants
i. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast." So they took it.

e. Steward tastes the Wine and calls over the Bridegroom And says to him

i. "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now."

III. Movement

a. Wedding Feast at Cana in Galilee

i. Mary is invited and so is her Son, Jesus, and His disciples

b. While the guests are enjoying themselves with food and company, the wine runs out

i. Mary notices the situation and informs her Son

c. The Son responds in the negative

i. Mary turns to the servants and reassures them

d. Jesus instructs the servants

i. They fill jars used for purification with water again

1. as if other guests were soon to arrive that would need to purify themselves before entering the wedding feast as was customary.

e. Jesus changes the water to wine

i. By His divine power

1. The text does not indicate if this was done with a prayer or a simple hand motion

a. But later texts will demonstrate how Jesus prayed before performing many of His miracles

i. Feeding of the 5000

ii. Feeding of the 4000

iii. Delivery of the boy from a mute demon

f. One of the servants takes a sample of the water now wine to the head steward for tasting
g. Head steward tastes and is pleased to call over the bridegroom
   i. Whom he then compliments on saving the best wine for last

h. Jesus’ disciples came to believe in him
   i. By the performance of this miracle

IV. CONCLUSION

a. The multiple reference to water and wine indicates that the old covenant, which required purification of the outside of the body, was soon to be replaced with a purification from within the body, as wine is something consumed.
   i. Of course we know that Jesus will use wine at the Last Supper when He turns it into His blood, and commands us to drink it so that we may have eternal life.

b. Mary plays a very important role in her Son’s ministry. She is there at His first miracle and she will be there at His last miracle – the Last Supper.
   i. Though this is not specifically stated in scripture, we know it is quite likely as she is with Jesus during his Passion and later crucifixion. It is highly unlikely she would have remained in Galilee only to be informed of her Son’s arrest, start out for Jerusalem, and be able to make it in time for His scourging and Crucifixion.

c. The sequence of the events as they occurred were not usual with Jewish Wedding Feasts
   i. These feasts were planned months in advance as they were very important and well attended.
      1. Knowing that a large crowd would be there, the wine would have been in ample supply, with no likelihood that it would run out.

   ii. After the guests had arrived and purified themselves, the stone jars after they were emptied would have remained empty.
      1. To have them filled again, with no new guests arriving, must have seemed a bit strange to any observant guest
a. Who are the disciples since they came to believe in Jesus *after* this miracle.