

THE DEVIL'S BANQUET HALL

TEXT: *John 2:10: And saith unto him, 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.*

A great objection against the Bible, and not only that, but against our Lord Jesus Christ, is found in this miracle of Jesus turning water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana. There is no difficulty, even for the extreme teetotaler, finding the objection if he considers carefully, exactly what is said and precisely what Jesus did here. No unbeliever, blinded by the god of this world, can rightly divide the Word of God.

2 Corinthians 4:3: But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.



An atheist said to a new convert, “*I hear you have gotten religion*”. The Christian replied, “*I’ve become a new creature in Christ, sir, if that’s what you mean.*” He then said, “*I suppose you believe that ridiculous story that Jesus turned water into wine.*” The Christian replied, “*I don’t know about that, being unfamiliar with the Bible, but I’ll show you something more wonderful than that! If you will come to my house, I’ll show you how Jesus has changed whiskey into furniture, and beer into food and clothes for all my family.*”

Jesus has been made a welcomed and honored guest at this wedding in Cana of Galilee. Marriage is an honorable estate instituted by God in the time of man’s innocence when God married the first couple. Here we find Christ, blessing and sanctifying it.

Unless you take Christ into your marriage, it isn’t worth the paper the license is written upon. Over 60% of the marriages of our day go into divorce court and on the rocks because the sacredness of marriage is not considered, and Christ is not consulted. Worst of all, the poor, sweet, precious and innocent children suffer the consequences of the parents’ willful exclusion of Christ from His rightful place in the marriage and home. But thank God, Jesus was invited to this great celebration, and all that attended shall never forget what happened. None there will ever regret that Jesus and His disciples and followers came and witnessed the marriage.

The wedding music thrilled the lovers' hearts, and the singers deepened the atmosphere with love's sweet songs while the guests ate and drank. Suddenly things changed. Word is passed around, "*The wine is exhausted.*" The bridegroom is embarrassed, and the Governor of the feast is frustrated as the celebration begins to fizzle out. The mother of Jesus, who must have been well acquainted with the family, said to Jesus, "*They have no wine*".

We will find out, as many of us have already discovered, that man's supply is always running out. Our source of joy is limited. The world has not enough to satisfy the human heart. If we try to live from our own source of supply and pleasure, we are doomed for disappointment. Not only is the quality poor, and — in most cases — sorry, but the supply is limited. Most Christians sought Jesus only when in deep need. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Shortage is not of God, for His supply is inexhaustible.

Mary pondered deeply in her heart concerning Jesus, and believing all that the Holy Spirit had shown her, she felt only a word to her Son would be all that was necessary. She carried in her bosom the world's most wonderful secret which was never discovered, but must be revealed. She was waiting for the moment when this Holy One, conceived of the Holy Spirit, would reveal Himself as the Son of God by performing a miracle.

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Faith is never left unrewarded. Faith released the mighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ to the amazement of all. It is nonetheless amazing to us who have seen His miracles and answers to prayer each time He performs another wonder before our very eyes. Mary's faith was tested and tried and proven.

John 2:4-5: Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. ⁵ His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

Mary is not disturbed or offended, but turns to the servants and says something that discloses the nature of divine faith and human belief or feelings. It is hidden, but still in plain sight, the very secret of getting answers to prayer and receiving things from the Lord. "***HIS MOTHER SAITH UNTO THE SERVANTS, WHATSOEVER HE SAITH UNTO YOU, DO IT.***" There is no such thing as faith without action.

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James 2:14: What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?

James 2:17: Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

James 21-22: Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? ²² Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

John:15:14: Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

John 2:5: Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it!

To Continue, read the next verse:

John 2:6: And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. [or about a barrel of water each].



Jesus uses best for His glory, empty vessels! In a low, soft, yet vibrant voice, with majestic authority, He told the servants to: “Fill the waterpots with water.” They were shocked at such a command, and being frustrated already by the wine playing the height of the celebration, what will they do? “Water is no substitute for wine”, they would declare. “Who does He think He is anyway?”

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The tests of faith are very simple and unsuspecting to us. That is why we have missed many a blessing and have been robbed of many answered prayers. Faith does not argue or reason, it obeys. Or, do you serve the Lord Jesus in the spirit of a hired hand and retort, “We were not hired to fill waterpots, and what’s more, our church does not do things this way. It is ridiculous.” Do you know Him who speaks this, *‘Fill the waterpots with water?’*

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These servants must have known Him. They filled the waterpots to the brim with water. Then Jesus said:

John 2:8: And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

Would you take the “water” to the Governor of the feast? What a foolish thing this seems to the mind of unbelief. “One cannot afford to ruin his reputation with the public”,

many of us have said, when pressed with the claims of Christ for the healing miracle in our bodies, for the salvation of our souls. It is impossible to act on such an occasion as this without faith, real faith in Jesus. Do we hear one say: "Have you ever done this before?" And do we hear another servant answer, "No, but I believe in Him and I am going to do just what He told me to do."

John 2:9-10:

⁹ When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

¹⁰ And saith unto him, 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.



As they poured the water out, lo and behold, in the very act of pouring the water, it became rich, red wine. They obeyed the word of Jesus and got the greatest blessing out of the miracle He performed. And, best of all, Jesus is glorified when we believe in Him to the extent that He can take faith and create the answer.

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John 1:3: All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.

Faith never wonders, nor questions how or why a miracle is done, but rejoices in WHO does them. It is no mystery to me that Jesus could make wine out of water. Jesus spoke in:

John 15:1: I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman.

He is not cumbered with all the processes of nature, as He set it into operation. (To produce grapes, they are pressed into juice, and juice by fermentation turns into wine.) Fermentation is a process of decay, or death, which takes time to accomplish. Jesus made wine instantly; pure and wholesome, showing His creative power and manifesting His glory. It was so delicious that the ruler of the feast exclaimed with astonishment:

“Thou hast kept the good wine until now!” And He knew not whence it was, but the servants which drew the water knew. The obedient servants of God today share a great secret unknown to the public; faith episodes behind the scenes. Notice the effect it had on the disciples in:

John 2:11: This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His Glory; and His disciples believed on Him.

The world remembers that wedding feast. The servants of Jesus obeyed the commandments of faith and thereby became partners together with Jesus in turning the disappointments of this life into appointments with Christ, who begins where man’s supply runs out. Thus, the meaning of:

Psalms 23:5: Thou preparest a table before Me in the presence of Mine enemies: thou anointest My Head with oil; My Cup runneth over.

Now note especially the words of the bridegroom:

John 2:10: And saith unto him, 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.

The Governor of the feast said more than he intended to, or rather, there is more truth in what he said than he imagined. It is a fact the world over; the good wine first, and the worst, serve last, when men are well drunk. **This is the trick of the devil. He gives the best first and when you are enthralled and intoxicated on worldly pleasures, then with muddled brain, empty pockets, and sad heart, the worse is brought forth.**

First, take a warning glance at the House of Feasting which satan built. Look within the banqueting hall, or the tavern, where he tempts the unwary. There are THREE sections where satan entertains his guests, and we will mark the rule that holds good at all tables; first the good wine, and afterwards that which is worse.

Table # I.

At the first section of tables, I beg you never to sit down and drink there. It is the loud and noisy crowd who know not they are guests of hell. The end of all the feasting shall be in the depths of the Lake of Fire. Satan’s first cup is the cup of worldly pleasure.

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Many sit at this, rich and poor alike, and spend all they have. It contains many honorable guests, for there have been more princes, kings, mayors, aldermen and great merchants sitting at this table than at any other. There is a little restraint at first. They proceed cautiously in indulging much in lust, but before long they plunge headlong into its joys. Could it be thought that bodies could be capable of such ecstasy as this? We drink again a deeper draught, with no thought of abandoning ourselves to its intoxication, and our brains begin to reel in its sinful delight.

First, a show, then a smoke, then a drink, and on and on, satan fills our cups. First, the best, then when we have well drunk, he brings on that which is worse. We know that as a man soweth that shall he also reap; and after this kind of life there comes something worse. What more can we do? We committed adultery, lied, stole, and tried all wickedness imaginable; we drained every cup of pleasure. Give us something fresh. We have tried the theaters all around and wouldn't give you a cent for them all. We have done every kind of pleasure that can be conceived, and they are all tasteless, if only there was something new. And the devil heckles us with more taunting lusts as we have spent all, and now the cheaper courses that finally will lead us to eternal destruction.



There are many who, still young, will mock at this warning, for them, as yet, know not the depths of satan, nor where worldly pleasures will lead. God said, *"Pleasure with the world is enmity with God. Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Whosoever, therefore, will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God"*. This is found in:

1 John 2:15-17: Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the Will of God abideth for ever.

Every sinner has, at the end, brought himself to the gates of hell where all hope and joy fades into blackness and darkness forever. Now, they are facing the last cup, when their sins haunt and transgressions perplex, and no mortal language can tell the horrors of the last tremendous cup. Now satan speaks with soft and earnest tones: "Life is a grief and a failure. There isn't any more happiness for you. Come and commit suicide. Come with



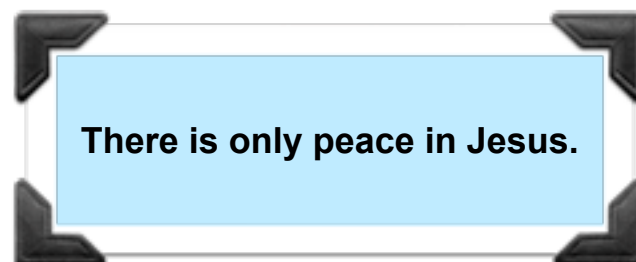
me to the sweet water's edge of yonder bridge. Now, I congratulate you as you stand here on the edge of genuine happiness. If you have sufficient courage, you will soon enter into perfect peace. Plunge now into the bosom of the deep, which will cover all your cares and troubles, and you will sleep on forever in uninterrupted ease”.

A greater voice of God in our souls, called consciences, though seared and almost out of sight, interrupt these temptations of satan: Spring not from this bridge, for such an act will bring no relief to our souls! It would be opening the door to deeper sorrow, grief, and pain, unending. These thoughts seemed to touch us and we began to draw away, but satan continues . . .

“Don't be a coward. Have you not found that the best joys of this life are worthless, and your troubles are so great you can no longer bear them? Why try to continue under this load? You have tried theater, drinking, smoking, prostitution, travel; now what is there left to enjoy since these no longer satisfy? Religion is a failure and has nothing to offer you. The world would be far better off without churches. The only work they do is annoy the conscience of people while they have a good time, and in many cases cast a heavy gloom over them in death. Why not leap into the waters, whose velvety touch shall smooth down all your cares, and bury yourself in peace. Look on its smiling face. Here is where many moonlit nights beckoned you before, and even now, to the more perfect comfort.”



At this point, we actually leaned over and were looking thoughtfully into the waters below us. Then the good angel lovingly entreated us once more: “Think of your many friends, and the disgrace it will bring to your family. Remember God, who made the waters and made them not to comfort dying men. There is no peace to be found in such a manner of ending life. There is only peace in Jesus. Jesus said, *“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”*. Go to the House of God, for there you will find those who know by experience, the truthfulness of my words.



Matthew 11:28: Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Table # 2.

Don't forget the next section of tables, for many are here who would have never thought that these tables would entertain the next feast of hell. The tables are so clean, and the atmosphere is so quiet. The wine seems to have no intoxication in it and the guests are all so self-contented. Ask the friends of hell who they are, and they will tell you, "We are serving the self-righteous, the Pharisees".

But what kind of wine is it that he is serving them? "Tell no one. It is the wine of self-satisfaction. But tell no one, lest these sanctimonious hypocrites discover and we lose our most respectable guests. It is at these tables that many of our guests begin, with the good wine, and then they become ready for the other sections of my banqueting hall. Can you not hear them bragging on themselves?" They say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are; extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican (tax collector)".



They know that cup, those self-deceiving hearers. Oh, that they only knew how deadly the mixture is within. They refuse to subject themselves to the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ. They treat everybody right. Their word is worth 100 cents of the dollar. They go to church every Sunday. They are drinking of the cup of the devil!



The best he has first, and the good wine makes them swell with self-important dignity, as they puff with accursed pride. But wait a while, thou deceived, but damned church members. Satan is quite as satisfied with them, they cause him no trouble. They are not born again, not saved and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. They prefer going to church, being baptized, and making a profession of religion than repenting of their sins and trusting in Jesus Christ for pardon.

Ah, poor souls. Wait until they receive the last cup from Satan and find he gives the worst last. At the last they will discover that the things they had placed their hope in have failed, and death is close behind them. It forces them onward to despair

inasmuch as they proudly rejected Christ, and must now drink the wine of the wrath of God without mixture. They shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.

Revelation 14:11: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.



Table #3.

Some of us have already become intoxicated with this last table, and declare with an air of contempt that we are not afraid to die. And we tell the truth, for satan's ministers are ministers of righteousness and have blinded us to the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ. Now, we are at the devil's most popular table. It is secluded and private. Here are the tables for the secret sinners. And here the old rule is observed. First, the best wine and last the worst. In comes the first cup and, oh, it is sweet. Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. Forbidden fruit is the sweetest. Our eyes are open like Eve, and we want another piece of the forbidden fruit. Finally, we will exclaim: "What have we done! What have we been doing"? "Ah", cry these Achaeans, "that wedge of gold, and the Babylonian garment look so good. Now we will hide it, for surely it will not be discovered." But, be sure our sins will find us out.



Secret sinners, fear your wrongs will be discovered. We have no peace, no happiness, and we are being filled with the fear. We may be detected by our wives, our children, our employers, and the physician may be able to tell. Finally, satan brings us to the worst section of tables where he promises us relief, and where we can drown out the

memories of these haunting sins.

Galatians 6:8: For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap Life Everlasting.

In closing, let's go over the Banqueting House of our Savior, where He feasts with the beloved. He does not serve His feast to His children like the prince of darkness. The first cup Christ brings to us is very often the cup of bitterness, of

remorse, conviction, sorrow, and misery. Yes, the worst cup is first. He will not have us infatuated with the Gospel. We must count the cost, lest we begin to build and are not able to finish. Jesus seeks to have no disciples who are dazzled by first appearances. He begins with the worst, and many have tasted a cup so bitter that perhaps no tongue can ever describe it. It is the cup of conviction. The apostle Paul drank of it, and for three days and nights was blind and in misery. He neither ate nor rested.

Then came Jesus. He showed His hands and feet and His side, and said, "*Sinner, I have suffered much for thee. My precious Blood I shed, that thou mightiest ransomed be. I gave My Life for thee, wilt thou leave and forsake the world of sin and follow Me*"?

Jesus gives the worst first, and saves the best till last. If the Christian has the best wine coming, why should he envy the worldling? David once did. He was discontented with the prosperity of the wicked, until the Lord showed him their latter end, and the end of the righteous. They have their wicked pleasures now, my turn will come afterwards.

I can see old Lazarus at the gate, while the dogs licked his sores: "My turn is coming." When the angels shall carry the faithful into the bosom of the Lord Jesus, those of us who fare sumptuously every day will lift our eyes in hell, being tormented, and cry for just one drop of water.

THE GOOD WINE (John 2:10)

At the wedding, it had been just ordinary people, obscure family, probably poor, for the account bears this out. Hardly had the wedding started when the wine ran out. Jesus attended, for He is interested in the common people, the least and the smallest. Jesus could have begun his ministry by raising the dead, but didn't; just a small start. Many overplay their call, oversell themselves because they are carnal, they want to do something BIG. Here is where self kills a good start in the ministry. Self-centered, afraid of full surrender to Christ, we are often proud of what we should be ashamed of, and ashamed of what we should be happy about.

John the Baptist said:

John 3:30: "He must increase, I must decrease."

Jesus blessed a couple just starting out in life. He wants to do the same for us. He is interested in weddings. Human history started with one and will end with one. The second most important choice you will make in life is choosing the right one. Sex is not

the main factor, nor a pretty face or body. No second choice if you mess up the first one. Fulfillment of life is not complete in us. It is outside of us. Only God knows what is behind that pretty face, that curly hair, that layer of make-up. Idolatry is associated with adultery. Hebrews, in ancient times, said the body is holy and should be covered. The heathen said it is a plaything, so display it, and now we have pictures of nude idols.

In those old times, they killed a man for taking another man's wife. When we break God's Word, we destroy the authority of the Bible. If we get away with sin, we break God's commandment, we are in trouble with God. We have no right to give our bodies to anyone but our married mates.

Mark 7:13: Making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

When a man obeys God, a miracle takes place. The pots of water in **John 2**, were for hand washing and foot washing. They contained 120-150 gallons each. When did water turn to wine? This is one of the greatest examples of faith. Jesus told the servants to take this hand and foot water to the Governor of the feast. They must have been scared to death. If it had been me, I would have stuck my finger in it to check it out. We came to Jesus. He told us what to do and we never did it. Unless we believe and obey Him, no supernatural signs and wonders will happen; the common and ordinary will never become supernatural. The common water has only limited satisfaction after the miracle.

God didn't fix us up so we would not sin; but He did fix us up so we would not enjoy sin any longer.

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