

14. The Gospel of John—2:1a

“A Wedding in Cana” Pt.1

(1/14/18)

As we come to John chapter 2, we come to a story that has become somewhat controversial, a story that has confused many—both Christian and non-Christian alike.

It’s the story of a wedding that was held in the town of Cana—a wedding whose guest list included Jesus, His disciples and Jesus’ mother Mary.

Now, there’s nothing controversial or confusing about a wedding itself—they happen every week all over the world.

What makes this story confusing and somewhat controversial was the interaction between Jesus and His mother, as well as how Jesus seems to be promoting alcoholic consumption thru the first miracle of His ministry.

Now, let me stop and say this by way of introduction.

I want you to be sensitive, as we study John’s gospel to the fact that—John is very selective in the stories and miracles he chooses to present to his readers.

He said himself at the end of this book that Jesus did many other miracles during His earthly ministry, so much so that, *“If they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written, but I have chosen these that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”*

In other words, John chose certain things to include in his gospel—not just for their historical information, but also for their spiritual application.

The Scriptures in general and John’s gospel in particular are rich in typology.

The dictionary defines typology as follows, “*the study and interpretation of types and symbols, originally [and] especially [found] in the Bible*”.

The story of this wedding not only gives us some insight into the cultural aspects of a Jewish wedding— but John is using it (ultimately the Holy Spirit) to communicate to us some important spiritual truths and lessons.

John 2:1 (NKJV)

¹ On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee...

The ‘**third day**’—is either a reference to the third day after they arrived in Cana, or to the third day after Nathaniel became a disciple of Christ (1:47-51).

Cana was a little village located about 8 or 9 miles from Nazareth.

As you know, Jesus grew up in Nazareth—and no doubt most of His family still lived there.

In fact, many believe that this wedding could have been for one of Jesus’ relatives, a cousin perhaps, which would explain why Mary was so concerned about the lack of wine and the fact that she seemed to have authority over the servants (v.5)—possibly because she was family.

It would also appear that, by this time, Joseph, Mary’s husband’ had died.

But, I want you to understand that weddings were a big deal back then—in fact they were a major social event in first-century Israel.

Most of the weddings back then lasted a week—but if the family was wealthy they could go on for a couple of weeks.

Now, to fully appreciate the spiritual lessons that we can glean from a Jewish wedding—we need to understand the stages that were involved in the typical Jewish marriage.

The Shiddukhin

The very first step in the Jewish marriage process is known as the **Shiddukhin**.

The Shiddukhin refers to the choosing of a bride for a son.

Most marriages back then were arranged by the father of the groom.

The biblical example of this is found in Genesis 24:1-4.

Notice in this passage Abraham makes arrangements for his son Isaac's wedding by sending his eldest servant to go back to his hometown and get a bride for Isaac.

While the father usually had the responsibility for choosing a bride for his son personally—if it was not possible (as in Abraham's life), it was acceptable for the father to delegate this responsibility by designating a representative called a *shadkhan* (a marriage broker or matchmaker).

Now, after a potential bride was found, the next thing to happen was the **Ketubah**.

The Ketubah

Ketubah means "*written*".

The ketubah was and still is today the "*marriage contract*."

Before the marriage contract would be signed—the father of the groom would negotiate the dowry also known as the "*bride-price*" with the father of the bride.

A portion of the bride-price would go to the bride to use as security in the event she was widowed or divorced.

The remainder of the bride-price went to the bride's father to compensate him for the fact that, unlike a son, his daughter wouldn't be able to carry on his name, help with labor on the family farm, or take over the family business.

After the dowry or 'bride-price' was agreed upon and a down payment was given—a contract would be signed to validate the agreement.

The Mikveh

After that the couple, in preparation for the betrothal—would separately immerse themselves in a ritual purification pool known as a '*mikveh*' which signified they were now spiritually pure. At this point the next part of the marriage process would take place known as '**eyrusin**'.

The Eyrusin

The word *eyrusin* means '**betrothal**'—also called *kiddushim* which means "*sanctification*" or "*set apart*."

This word really defines the purpose of the betrothal period—a time in which the couple is set apart from everyone else (all other potential mates) to prepare themselves to enter into the exclusive covenant of marriage with each other.

At this point the couple would stand together under the *Huppah* (canopy)—and publicly exchange vows.

This was considered the **wedding ceremony**.

While under the Huppah the couple would exchange objects of value such as rings—and a cup of wine was shared to seal the betrothal vows.

At this point, the couple was considered legally married—so much so that if they later decided to brake things off they would have to get a formal divorce.

Or, if one of them should die during the betrothal period the other would be considered a widow or a widower.

During this period even though the couple was considered legally married—the marriage wasn't consummated, and the couple didn't live together.

The Preparation of the Bridal Chamber

You see, in Jewish culture, even though the couple was now legally married they knew they couldn't live together or consummate their marriage—until he went to his father's house and prepared a place for them to live known as the **bridal chamber**.

In those days the couple would live with his parents, on their property because that's where his inheritance and land would be.

And so, during the betrothal period the man would prepare a place for them to live—and how he would do it was to simply add onto his father’s house by making an addition, a dwelling place for them to live in.

And so, for the next year he would be gone from her preparing this place for them.

The bride also was to keep herself busy during this time in preparation for the wedding day—among other things wedding garments were to be sewn and prepared for the guests. (mention Matt.22:1-14)

Of course, she was going to miss him and be troubled he had to leave her—but he would encourage her by telling her,

“I’m going to go and prepare a place for us, but I will be back to get you and then we will never be apart again.”

This promise was known as a **Matan** or ‘bridal gift’.

A Matan amounted to a pledge of his love for her.

Its purpose was to be a reminder to his bride, during their days of separation, of his love for her, that he would be thinking about her—and that he would return to receive her as his wife.

But guess what? When he finished the bridal chamber, the tradition was that the man didn’t have the right to say, *“I’m finished, I’m going to get my bride.”*

That right was reserved for his father—he alone had the authority to say when the bridal chamber was totally finished, and his son could go get his bride.

So, the bridegroom couldn't give her a date when he was coming back to get her because that right was reserved for the father.

All he could say to her was, *"I'm going to prepare a place for you, but I don't know the exact day and hour I'll be back to get you because only my father knows that—it's up to him."*

The Jewish fathers were kind of rascals with regard to this—the son would get it all done and say to his father, *"Dad, it's done, look I'm finished, can I go and get my bride?"*

The father would walk around and say, *"Well, I don't like the way you hung that door...I think you need to put a little more work in over there, it's not quite right after all this is where you're going to be living with your bride..."* "OK, dad, ok!"

So, he'd go around fixing everything making it perfect for his bride!

The Bridegroom Comes for His Bride

Now there was a liaison appointed that would keep the bride updated and take messages back and forth between and bride and bridegroom called the *"friend of the bridegroom."* (In our culture he is known as the 'best man')

He would keep an eye on the progress of the bridal chamber and send progress reports back to the bride and her bridesmaids on how the work was going.

Because of his input and encouragement (*"it won't be long now, stay vigilant and keep watching for his coming"*), the women knew it was going to be any day now—even though they didn't know the exact day and hour.

The custom of those Jewish fathers was to wait until the middle of the night and then for the father to wake up his son and say, *"Son, it's time—go get your bride!"*

Now when the father told his son, “*It’s time, go and get her*”—he would quickly round up his closest friends and they would go running through the streets of Jerusalem or whatever village they lived in with shouts of joy and excitement.

It was customary for one of the groom’s party to go ahead of the bridegroom, leading the way to the bride’s house and shout, “*Behold, the bridegroom comes*”—which would be followed by the blowing of the shofar (trumpet).

Again, it was the job of the bridesmaids to be watching for the bridegroom’s coming.

They were getting progress reports and knew about when he was going to be coming for her, and when it looked like it was getting really close (in the next few days)—they began to hold a “candlelight vigil” (actually they used oil burning lamps) until he came.

The bridesmaids made sure their lamps were ready and they had enough oil for them because they knew it was the custom of those Jewish fathers to wait until the middle of the night—so they needed to be ready.

Any bridesmaid that wasn’t ready when the bridegroom came (if she fell asleep or ran out of oil)—she was excluded from the wedding feast.

As the bridegroom and his friends came they would storm the house and *snatch* her away—it was literally an *abduction*.

This final step in the wedding process is called ‘**Nissuin**’—which means “*to carry*”.

He would take her back to his father’s house, to the bridal chamber where the marriage was consummated.

After the marriage was consummated—he would emerge from the bridal chamber with his bride by his side, to the shouts and applause of the people and he would present his bride to his family, friends, and to the whole community.

This would be the first time she would stand beside her husband and be officially presented as his wife.

The pinnacle of this joyful celebration was the **marriage supper**.

It was much more than just a sit-down dinner for all the guests—it included seven full days of food, music, dance and celebration.

After this week of celebration at the marriage supper—the groom was free to bring his bride to their new home to live together as husband and wife in the full covenant of marriage.

Now of course all of this parallels the stages of the marriage of the Church to her Bridegroom Jesus Christ.

The Shiddukhin

Remember, this was where the father arranged the marriage of his son by choosing a bride for him.

The Bible says that we have been promised to the Son (chosen to be His Bride) by the Father from the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1).

The Ketubah

This was where the price was settled upon that the bridegroom would pay for his bride—and a written contract was signed, sealing the covenant.

As far as the “bride-price” went, Jesus paid for it Himself when He went to Calvary and gave His life as a ransom—a dowry if you will to purchase His Bride.

A mutual contract (covenant) was entered into—

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee (Greek—“down payment” or “engagement ring”) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

The **Betrothal** was entered into when we pledged our love and commitment to Jesus at our conversion and then being ‘mikvehed’ or **baptized** in water in front of friends and family as the symbol of the marriage covenant we had just entered into with Him.

To celebrate this stage of their relationship the couple would take a cup of wine and they would both drink from it—

Luke 22:20

Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

1 Corinthians 11:25 (NLT)

²⁵ ...Do this to remember me as often as you drink it.”

The Preparation of the Bridal Chamber

Now, after the covenant was entered into—the next thing a young man would do would be to go to his father’s house and prepare a place for them to live.

John 14:1, 3 (NKJV)

¹ "Let not your heart be troubled...I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. (this was our Bridegroom’s Matan to us, His Bride).

Matthew 24:36 (NKJV)

³⁶ "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

The Bridegroom Comes for His Bride

When the father said, "*Son, it's time to get your bride*"—the bridegroom would quickly come for his bride with his closest friends.

And they would go running through the streets of Jerusalem or whatever village they lived in blowing trumpets and shouting with excitement.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

At the time of the Rapture, the marriage will be 'consummated' in the sense that our oneness with our Bridegroom will be complete and permanent.

During this time, we will be hidden away from the world—until after the 7-year Tribulation Period.

And then our Lord will come back to the earth, with His Bride at His side where He will officially present us to the world as His wife.

Revelation 19:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

The phrase “**for the marriage of the Lamb has come**” should actually be translated, “**for the marriage supper or feast has come.**”

You see by this time we are already married to Jesus which is made clear by the statement in v.7, “**and His wife has made herself ready**”—ready for what?

Ready for the marriage feast or supper which always followed the consummation of the marriage—

Revelation 19:9 (NKJV)

⁹ Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

The Bible says we will then reign with Him on the earth as His Queen (Rev.5:10).

When Jesus came to the earth the first time—yes He came to save us, but save us to be His Bride.

His whole First Coming was about paying the bride-price on Calvary’s cross.

When He ascended back to His Father, He sent back the Holy Spirit to gather His Bride from all over the world—from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. (Revelation 5:9)

At His Second Coming He will return with His Bride, presenting Her to the world as His Wife and She will reign with Him on His throne.

Right now, Jesus is proposing marriage to the people of this world, those who refuse will be cast out into the Lake of Fire (hell) forever—it’s not too late to accept Jesus’ proposal!