

Manifest Glory

John 2:1-11

This is the first of his signs; Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

What does the word “glory” mean to you? Many words can be used to define it, and should you consult a dictionary you will discover that a great many words are used for that purpose. “Glory” certainly denotes high honor, and in the case of God the highest honor of all.

The Lord Jesus Christ was socially involved. He had become one of us. Though he was God incarnate he did not keep himself aloof from his creation. And so we find the Lord, his mother, and his disciples doing something that most of humankind have done. They had been invited to a wedding feast, and they had come to participate in the festivities.

The Lord used many occasions to teach the truth that God has a timetable for all his purposes, and that included the work of the Messiah on earth. The wine provided for the wedding feast had run out. This was a very troubling circumstance for the host. It greatly endangered his reputation among his peers.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, not wanting their host to be humiliated, came to her son and privately made him aware of the situation. The Lord’s reply to her statement (“they have no wine”) references the timing of God. “Woman what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”

What hour was the Lord talking about? Again and again in the gospels there are references to the goal of his ministry on earth. He set his face toward Jerusalem and would not be kept from dying in the place of his people. Everything that the Lord did was important, but the thing of first importance was his atoning death on the cross for sinners. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

In spite of his seemingly negative reply to his mother, the Lord did something. In the house where the wedding feast was being held there were six stone water jars. They were very large. Each of them could hold twenty or thirty gallons. These “jars” were used for rites of purification. They were religious in character, associated with the law of Moses in the minds of the Jews. The Lord told them to fill the jars to the very brim. Then he told them to draw off some of the “water” and take it to the master of the feast. The feast-master was quite surprised. He called the bridegroom to him and said, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

It may seem strange to say that this event was a manifestation of Christ’s glory. But it was in a very wonderful way. There were six stone containers. The number six in scripture is associated with man. It falls short of the number seven which typically represents fullness, and which is used to speak of God, as in Revelation 1:4.

The Lord Jesus Christ had come to fulfill Old Testament expectations. He would actually keep the law. No one had ever done that without sin. He would fill up the old to the very brim. His righteousness would demonstrate love for God and man in a way that was demanded by the law of God, but he would go far beyond that. He is like new wine, extraordinary in its quality. The new wine of his life would be like no other that had come before. The new wine of his death would be like no other that had come before. His life would be perfect in every way, absolutely pleasing to God the father. His death would accomplish the salvation of sinners, and set them free once and for all.

The rites of purification wearily performed by men and women would be fulfilled, and an unrepeatable atonement would be provided for the undeserving people of God's choice.

It is this accomplishment that primarily makes the glory of God known. God is glorified in his creative work. To consider the heavens is to come to acknowledge the glory of God. But he is especially glorified in his saving work. And that was accomplished by the horror of becoming a substitute for sinners like you and me, and dying in our place on the cross.

by Joe Nesom