

The wedding in Cana--*John:1-11*

In John 1:43 Jesus decided to leave for Galilee, since He was in Judea, on the east side of the Jordan River, more or less opposite Jericho, probably. In 2:13 Jesus returned to Judea, but to Jerusalem, because of the Passover. The interval would have been two or three weeks. Well, each 'leg' of the trip must have been at least 130 km, on foot, which allows us to deduce that the reason for the trip was of some importance.

"On the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee" (2:1). The third day counting from when? 1:19-28 happened on one day; 1:29-34 happened the next day (2nd); 1:35-42 happened the following day (3rd); 1:43-51 happened the day after that (4th). So the third day here should be counted from the last day mentioned (1:43-51), although it may be included (which is likely, in Jewish thought). The wedding feast began that day, but such feasts often lasted for several days. Jesus and His disciples (four?) had a walk of about 130 km (probably): 90 up the Jordan Valley (relatively flat and straight) and 40 through more rugged terrain. Since everyone made their journeys on foot, and therefore were used to it, they could easily complete the journey in two days. Therefore, they would have arrived there by the end of the first day of the party (if not earlier).

Jesus' family lived in Natsareth, which was perhaps 30 km from Cana, in a straight line, but the terrain was rugged. The entire family was at the wedding (2:12), but the lack of any mention of Joseph permits us to understand that he was already dead. Therefore, as the eldest son, Jesus was the head of the family. Mary was in a position to give orders to the employees (2:5). Adding it all up, I come to the conclusion that the bride was one of Jesus' half-sisters,¹ which would give the mother, Mary, the authority to give instructions; it would also explain her concern about the lack of wine. It would also explain what prompted Jesus to undertake such a journey, only to return with little delay.

A wedding feast would usually last several days. The supply of food and drink would not run out until near the end, in the event. If Mary was the bride's mother, we can understand her concern about the lack of wine, since it would be a disgrace to the family. But why appeal to Jesus, even though He was the head of the family? What could He do? It seems to me that she was asking for a miracle, at least judging by the order she gave to the employees; in fact, it would be the only possible solution. Jesus' answer, that it was not yet time, goes in the same direction. But why, then, did He choose to act anyway? I do not know, the Text does not say; but I offer the following suggestion: Jesus well knew that the function of being His mother brought humiliation to Mary, because the gossips would not forgive the fact that she had married already pregnant (and even though Joseph had assumed him as a son, the physical aspect of Jesus didn't match)²—Jesus understood that he owed her a special consideration. Besides, Jesus owed the family a great deal, and it would be up to Him to avoid embarrassing her, if possible.

The fact is that Jesus acted and produced around 600 liters of wine—600 liters of wine! Well, if there were 100 people at the feast, that would make six liters per person! Who would drink six liters (near the end of the feast)? And the wine was of outstanding quality. My conclusion is that Jesus gave the new couple a nice gift — most of the wine would be left over, and could be sold later. Because it was very good, the wine would bring a good price. I find it curious that the first

¹ In Matthew 13:54-56 the inhabitants of Natsareth name Mary as the mother of Jesus; James, Joseph, Simon and Judas as His brothers (half-brothers); and they spoke of "all their sisters" (half-sisters). The use of 'all' suggests more than two, and the married woman in Cana would no longer be there. After Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary had a normal family.

² John 8:41 is inserted in the midst of a heated argument between Jesus and the Pharisees. They had researched everything about Jesus thoroughly. They knew that Jesus was born six months after Joseph and Mary's marriage, and was born normal size. Two plus two equals four.

miraculous sign was not a healing one, but a domestic one. He 'saved the feast', saving the family from a disgrace, and He made a significant contribution to the new couple's happiness—to them, at least, Jesus would always be remembered as a benefactor.