

Chapter 1

Cana

1.1 John 2.1–11

¹ Καὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ γάμος ἐγένετο ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ ἦν ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκεῖ· ² ἐκλήθη δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν γάμον. ³ καὶ ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν, Οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν. ⁴ [καὶ] λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὐπω ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου. ⁵ λέγει ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ τοῖς διακόνοις, Ὅτι ἂν λέγῃ ὑμῖν ποιήσατε. ⁶ ἦσαν δὲ ἐκεῖ λίθιναι ὑδρίαὶ ἕξ κατὰ τὸν καθαρισμὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων κείμεναι, χωροῦσαι ἀνὰ μετρητὰς δύο ἢ τρεῖς. ⁷ λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Γεμίσατε τὰς ὑδρίας ὕδατος. καὶ ἐγέμισαν αὐτὰς ἕως ἄνω. ⁸ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἀντλήσατε νῦν καὶ φέρετε τῷ ἀρχιτρικλίνῳ· οἱ δὲ ἤνεγκαν. ⁹ ὡς δὲ ἐγεύσατο ὁ ἀρχιτρικλινὸς τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον γεγενημένον, καὶ οὐκ ᾔδει πόθεν ἐστίν, οἱ δὲ διάκονοι ᾔδεισαν οἱ ἡντληκότες τὸ ὕδωρ, φωνεῖ τὸν νυμφίον ὁ ἀρχιτρικλινὸς ¹⁰ καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Πᾶς ἄνθρωπος πρῶτον τὸν καλὸν οἶνον τίθησιν, καὶ ὅταν μεθυσθῶσιν τὸν ἐλάσσω· σὺ τετήρηκας τὸν καλὸν οἶνον ἕως ἄρτι. ¹¹ Ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐφανερώσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ.

¹ On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there. ² Both Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They don't have wine." ⁴ Jesus said to her, "What is it to you and me, woman? My hour hasn't yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the helpers, "Do whatever he may say to you." ⁶ Now six stone jars were there, set for the purification of the Jews, holding up to eighty or one hundred twenty liters. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." They filled them to the top. ⁸ He said to them, "Draw and bring to the master of ceremonies." Which they did. ⁹ But when the master of ceremonies tasted the water now made wine — and he didn't know where it was from, but the helpers, who had drawn the water, knew — the master of

ceremonies called the groom ¹⁰ and said to him, “Everyone offers the good wine first, and when people are inebriated, the inferior one. But you, you have kept the good wine until now!” ¹¹ Such was the first of the signs that Jesus did in Cana of Galilee. He manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

1.1.1 Recent and less recent commentaries

I have been looking in the literature for comments about this particular problem of the six stone jars. Has anyone asked himself why this number is given, and its signification?

We may start with classical commentaries: Bultmann 1971; Barrett 1978; Lightfoot 1956. Quoting Barrett about the number of stone waterpots: ٤٤. It is possible though by no means certain that the number six is symbolic; cf. on 2.1.11. Six, being less by one than seven, the number of completeness and perfection, would indicate that the Jewish dispensation, typified by its ceremonial water, was partial and imperfect. Perhaps it should be noted that the event took place on the sixth day (see on 2.1); on the other hand, no numerical interpretation of the miracle can be entirely satisfactory since Jesus does not create a seventh vessel. That is precisely the question.

Ashton 1991 draws my attention to passages regarding the abundance of wine as an effect of the extraordinary blessings on the land (not his words). It would be important to see if these passages tie this abundance to the existence of the temple, and in what way. And all part of a nuptial imagery? (these passages are in Brown: well explained there too). For instance Amos 7.13-14 (late exilic or even post-exilic text? mountains will drip with the juice of grapes...); notion continued and exaggerated in Jewish apocalypics (2 Baruch 29; Ap 21?); Especially Ezekiel 47 (most important, I notice, 47.1: ... The water was coming down from below the right side of the House, south of the altar.). Hebrew: והַמַּיִם יִרְדּוּ מִתַּחַת מִן־הַיַּד הַיְמָנִית הַיְמִנִית מִן־גֹּב לְמִזְבֵּחַ; Isaiah 5 also perhaps?

Perhaps an archaeologist and social historian would be perspicacious enough. So, Reed 2003.

Nothing in Boyce 1999. This is the same author who translates Jn 2.3 as “Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Nough said.

Most important overview of the questions (pertinent, though with adventurous answers): Bultmann 1971, 117 (= page 82 of 1941 German edition). Nothing on my topic. But he notes: “Six large water jars of enormous capacity are standing ready.” Same page, note 4: “Καθαρισμός The purification is the ritual washing of the hands before and after meals;” this makes little sense, and is a view criticized, justly, in several recent publications. Bultmann notes (after ?) that from 480 to 700 liters of water are needed to fill the stone jars (note 3, *ibid.*). Ah, page 120, about figurative

language (remember that he titles this chapter: Epiphany something): “the wine refers not to any special gift but to Jesus’ gift as a whole, to Jesus himself as the Revealer, etc....” Add note 1, page 120: “The *view that the wine specifically refers to Jesus’ blood* is unlikely, for the reason that the blood of Jesus has hardly any role to play in John (only in 19.34, which however with its $\tilde{\alpha}\mu\alpha\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \upsilon\delta\omega\rho$ does not fit well with the ‘wine instead of water’ of 2.1–11 and I Jn. 1.7—6.51b–58 come from the editor, see ad loc.)” I learn in Bultmann that Wik., Dodd, and Barr. also reject this interpretation wine > blood. Bultmann insists on Dionysius cult in Syria as source for the significance of wine (ibid., pp. 118–19). In the same note 1, he pokes a little fun at Loisy and his remark about 6 being a “nombre imparfait”, and how Jesus ought perhaps to have conjured up another? Several authors, according to Bultmann, interpret the number six as referring to the six days of the week (7 being the seventh day, of salvation).

Culpepper 1998, 130–31: nothing new. Paraenesis. However, says: “Then, in the Temple he offers his body as the new Temple, the new place where one meets God” (130). Notices, like many others, the presence of Jesus’ mother, only here and at the moment of his death on the cross. Page 131: The six water pots were used by the Jews for ritual cleansing, as John explains—either for emphasis or as necessary information for Gentile readers. The number six may symbolize the incompleteness of the traditional ritual, which Jesus then literally fills (that is, fulfills) and replaces. Notices the pb caused by filling to the brim (overflow when helping oneself). Powerful symbol of wine: Eccl 9.7; Gen 27.28; Zech 10.6–7; Isa 25.6; Joel 2.19; 2.24; 3.18; Amos 9.13. Notes association with blood, therefore suffering and death. “Nevertheless, the eucharistic significance of this event is probably secondary.” (131: is this after Brown? no indication). Eschatological overtones perhaps? Page 237, about the piercing of Jesus’ side: suggests that the flow of water is to be understood perhaps in light of the giving of the spirit in Jn 7.37–39.

Wengst 2000 has interesting things to say. Regarding the *architriklinos*, he notes *tBer.* 4.10, which makes clear that there was need in a marriage feast for someone to be in charge. Slave or someone else (perhaps a neighbor, or someone with the skills and whose authority in these matters was well known)?¹ The fact that there is such a person is not necessarily a mark of great wealth, pace Reed.² These feast had many people, and the cooking, drinking, dishes and wares (quantities to get from neighbors?), perhaps the seating, needed more than the local *entr’aide*. Wengst, page 102, gives an example from Germany related to what I experienced in the fifties in Penvenan, for a baptism meal. Another interesting note by Wengst: This story about the wine is not the kind of tale told by people with well-stocked wine cellars, but by

¹Wengst, p. 102.

²Reed 2003, see exact page: in conclusion to his article.

people having once in a while to truly overflowing wine and food.³

Wine as a messianic sign. Wengst notes (after many others) 2 Baruch 29.5; Papias in Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 5.33.3-4; *bKeth* 111b (cf. Dt 32.14).⁴ But question asked by Ashton (after others): does the messiah need to do miracles? Unusual, this is not the role of the messiah. Jesus more like a prophet then (like Elijah and Moses)?

Sevenster 1973: he makes interesting remarks on the expression of Son of Man. Applied to the humanity of Jesus (p. 190)? He refuses the Mandaean gnosis as background (vs Bultmann): *ibid.* He sees Jesus as both so human and so divine as to live the depths of humiliation and the heights of glory.

I glean the following idea from Hanhart 1970, regarding the “mother of Jesus” in 2.1ff. and 19.25ff.: “to Israel the Gentiles are given as a son—represented by the ‘beloved disciple’—to the Gentiles Israel is given as a mother”.⁵

Malina 1998: With the type of social analysis the authors promote, We can appreciate their [the alternative society Jesus messianists] willingness to identify Jesus with the divinity of Israelite tradition, their self-distancing from their original mooring in temple-based Israelite Yahwism, and especially their emphatic stance relative to interpersonal commitment within their group. Rather than a self-distancing, I rather see a fulfillment and transformation that draws all of its meaning from this original tradition.

³P. 103.

⁴Wengst, note 82, page 103.

⁵Pages 39-40. He notes the longer reading in κ*: καὶ οἶνον οὐκ εἶχον, ὅτι συνετελέσθη ὁ οἶνος τοῦ γάμου.