

Saving the Best for Last

January 15 – John 2:1-12

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Day 15 – 350 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Jesus and His disciples attended a wedding in Cana where He turned water into wine. At times, a story like this may seem so simple and insignificant. However, we know that to be included in the Bible, the story must have purpose and meaning. Furthermore, to be in John's gospel, the story must point to the deity of Christ in some way.

Jesus' wedding wonder is important for several reasons. First, it was His first public miracle or sign (v.11). Evidently, Mary knew and had great confidence that Jesus could do such things (v.3, 4). Perhaps, she had seen Him perform similar marvels at home.

Miracles are unnatural or supernatural acts to draw attention to God (v.11). Jesus performed miracles to demonstrate His deity, so that others would see and believe that He was the Messiah, the Son of God (v.11). In this case, the miracle was more for the sake of His disciples than the guests.

Second, the wedding miracle was symbolic of the fact that Jesus would fulfill and replace the old system of the Mosaic Law and covenant. Notice that there were waterpots there for the Jewish custom of purification, a requirement of the law (v.6). But Jesus filled these pots with "new wine," which was far better than the previous wine (v.10). In other words, through Jesus, **God saved the best for last** and replaced the Old Testament with the New (*Isa. 25:6-9; Matt. 9:17; Mk. 2:22; Lk. 5:38, 39*).

Third, we saw a glimpse of Jesus' intentions and purpose. When Mary imposed on Him, Jesus responded, "My hour or time has not yet come" (v.4). Obviously, Jesus knew what He was here to do. His destiny was to lay down His life on the cross and to reverse the curses of sin and death (*Gen. 3:15*). He was not on anyone's schedule but His heavenly Father's.

Fourth, John recorded Mary's last words, "Whatever He (Jesus) says to you, do it" (v.5). What a fitting statement, not just to the servants in the moment, but for all of us. Whatever the Lord says, do it. Some people make more of Mary than they should. Mary's role was certainly important, but her responsibility was the same as ours — point others to Jesus, the only one worthy of worship.

Daily Reflection

Wine is a recurring symbol in Scripture. Perhaps the most well-known example is when Jesus connected wine to His blood and the new covenant at the last supper with His disciples (*Mk. 14:25*). In that sense, wine is a symbol of salvation and the eternal life, hope, and joy we have in Him.

Though it was great to have Jesus on earth for a short time, it will be even better when we all get to be with Him in heaven. Jesus hinted at this time when He said, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine (wine) until the day I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (v.25). At this time, we will get to be with Jesus at another wedding feast; but this time, He will be the groom, and we will be His bride, the Church (*Matt. 22:1-14*).

What encouragement do you find in these wedding stories?

This world is not the end for us. There will be better days. **Jesus saved the best for last!**

Missing the Point

January 16 – John 2:13-25

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Day 16 – 349 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Jesus and His disciples traveled to Jerusalem for the first time. The city was busy because of the Passover celebration. Passover is an annual festival when the Jews remembered how God freed their people from Egypt (*Ex. 12*).

Jesus didn't take long to get people's attention. He drove everyone out of the Temple, He made a crazy prediction, and He performed many signs. The disciples had to be caught off guard by Jesus' sudden burst of anger, but they recognized it as passion or zeal for God's house (*Ps. 69:9*). He couldn't stand the sight of watching crooks take advantage of worshipers, using this place of prayer as a place of profit. But this has always been a problem, evil men taking advantage of others by means of the church (i.e., Popes, kings, false teachers). Instead of leading people to God, they line their pockets with gold.

Jesus made a crazy prediction regarding the "Temple" that caused quite a stir. However, the temple in question was His body, not the Temple in Jerusalem (*v.21*). Jesus was foreshadowing His death and resurrection, something He would do many times during His ministry. The disciples, who had no idea what would happen to Jesus, didn't realize what He had said until much later (*v.22*).

Finally, Jesus performed signs among the people, and many believed in His name. However, these "converts" were more interested in Jesus' miracles than His message. They didn't recognize Him as the Savior, but rather they were just fascinated by His signs.

Unfortunately, these same issues still exist today. After all these years, people haven't changed (*v.25*). The nature of man sees God as a means to an end, a way to make money, a way to gain control over others, or a way to ease the conscience or make them feel better.

In other words, **people don't see God for who He is, only what He can do for them**. They might spend their entire life in church, playing the religious game, but **missing the point**. They might go through the motions attending, giving, serving, even holding an office, but they are doing these things for the wrong reasons. Jesus is not real to them.

Daily Reflection

Take a minute to search your heart. What are your reasons for following Jesus? What motivates you to do what you do? Is it to look good? Does it ease your conscience? Are you performing a religious duty, just going through the motions? **Are you playing a religious game and missing the point?** Are you "following Jesus," to see what you can get out of Him?

Take a minute to weigh your motives. Why do you go to the "temple"? What is it that really compels you to follow Christ?

Does He exist for you, or do you exist for Him?

Confess any false pretenses or insincere motives and commit to worshiping Him for who He is, not what He can do for you.

Victory in Jesus

January 17 – John 3:1-22

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Day 17 – 348 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

A Jewish leader named Nicodemus spoke with Jesus about salvation. John noted that people were fascinated by the miracles of Jesus but not interested in the message of Jesus (2:23-25). However, Nicodemus was different. Even as a Pharisee (expert in the law) and ruler (member of the Sanhedrin), Nicodemus pursued Jesus, though it was at night, perhaps to avoid embarrassment. Their conversation reveals incredible truths about Christ and salvation.

At first glance, it seems that Jesus unloads unsolicited information on Nicodemus, but we must remember that Jesus saw men's hearts (2:25). Jesus knew what Nicodemus was after even before he asked. His greeting told the story. Nicodemus viewed Jesus as a teacher or prophet sent by God (3:2). He did not yet see Jesus as the Messiah, God in the flesh. Jesus also knew that Pharisees believed they could enter the kingdom of God by keeping the law or following the rules. Jesus addressed both errors.

Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be "born again" to see the kingdom of God, not physically but spiritually (v.3-6; Ezek. 36:24-27). Just as a baby experiences new life, so does someone "born again" experience new life in Christ, as he is filled with the Holy Spirit. But babies are born of the flesh, meaning they inherit the sinful nature of man (v.6); but those born of the Spirit of God are made new, righteous, and holy.

But how does this happen? No one can "ascend into heaven" or earn salvation alone (v.13). God must descend from heaven and help him. That's what Jesus was there to do. He was (and is) God's offer of salvation to sinful man. That salvation does not come through works but through the sacrificial death and blood of Christ on the cross. That's why Jesus foreshadowed His crucifixion through the raising of Moses' staff in the Old Testament (Num. 21:4-9).

When the Israelites were bitten by serpents in the desert during the exodus, they were saved by God upon seeing Moses' staff with a bronze serpent wrapped around it. Jesus, too, would be lifted up on a cross, and all who see and believe in Him will be saved (Jn. 3:16). The curse of sin, brought about by the serpent in the Garden, was reversed by Jesus' crucifixion (Gen. 3:15).

Daily Reflection

Salvation is not about what you do but who you know. Do you know Jesus, not know of Him but know Him personally? Have you experienced Him? Do you have a relationship with Him? Have you known this new birth or new life in Him?

You may be like Nicodemus, searching for answers, trying to understand it all. The truth is that salvation is a mystery, like the wind. We don't see it. We don't know where it comes from or where it goes, but we know it's there (v.8). Why would a holy God reach down to sinful men to redeem them and give them new life in Him? **It's a mystery, but praise God that it's true!**

Did Nicodemus believe in Christ for salvation? Was he "born again"? Though we are not told in this passage, Nicodemus is mentioned two other times in the New Testament, once protesting the rulers' plot against Jesus (7:50-52) and again preparing His crucified body for burial (19:39). Based on the evidence, Nicodemus believed Jesus was the Messiah, his Savior.

The name Nicodemus means "**victor.**" As a Pharisee and ruler of the people, Nicodemus had risen to prominence, but he was not truly a victor until he found freedom from his sin in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. True victory is to overcome the spiritual chains that bind us. That cannot be done on our own. We need help. **True victory is only found in Christ.** What about you? Have you found victory in Jesus?

Competitors or Teammates?

January 18 – John 3:23-36; Luke 3:19, 20

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Day 18 – 347 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

John the Baptist shared his last words about Jesus, the Messiah. Evidently, they were prompted by the jealousy of his disciples who expressed their concern that more people were going to Jesus than coming to them (v.26). John's response is priceless.

The problem was that John's disciples viewed his ministry as a competitor to the ministry of Jesus. But John quickly rejected such talk by helping his disciples see the bigger picture.

First, John pointed out that we "receive nothing unless it has been given from heaven" (v.27). In other words, John reminded them of God's sovereignty. He is in control, and nothing occurs outside of His will and plan. Therefore, John's work had been assigned by God, and **he would not only be content with its degree of success but also its duration.**

Second, John reminded his disciples of the purpose of his ministry. He was tasked by God to be the forerunner of the Messiah, to point others to Christ when He arrived (v.28). Now that Jesus was on the scene, John recognized that his role was no longer needed. Rather than see Jesus as a competitor, John viewed Him as the groom, and he viewed himself as the best man (v.29). Jesus was the focal point. John was just the spotlight. Thus, he said, "He (Jesus) must increase, and I must decrease" (v.30).

Third, John pointed out to his disciples that there was no comparison between he and Jesus. Jesus was from heaven, while John was of earth (v.31). Jesus told of things that no man had ever seen (v.32, 33). Jesus also spoke the words of God. He was filled with the Spirit of God (v.34), and the Father had "given all things into His hand" (v.35). In Jesus was (and is) the keys to eternal life (v.36). In other words, there was no comparison between Jesus and John.

John was faithful and humble. He saw his place in the world, fulfilled his duties commendably, and now was ready to exit the stage. In a way, John's ministry represented the last of the Old Testament era. Now that Jesus was here, the New Testament would begin. Thus, John and the Old Testament were coming to an end, both represented in John's arrest and imprisonment.

Daily Reflection

If only all of us would view life and ministry the way John did. We often see ourselves in competition with other believers, small groups, ministries, churches, schools, missionaries, and so on, when we are not competitors at all. **We are all on the same team!** We are all called to shine our light on Jesus, not ourselves.

Have you ever fallen for the competition lie? What is its origin? What feeds it, and how can you rid yourself of it?

Do you believe that God is sovereign? Do you view your life and ministry as appointed by God? If so, then **be content with its success and duration.**

Forget the Waterpot

January 19 – John 4:1-45

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 19 – 346 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Jesus and His disciples spent time in Samaria, a place that most Jews avoided (v.9). Samaritans were “leftovers” from the fall of Israel (722 BC), half-breeds who compromised their Jewish heritage by intermarrying with Gentiles. Thus, Jews viewed Samaritans as despicable traitors, social misfits, and religiously unclean. Normally, Jews traveled around Samaria, but Jesus took His disciples directly into “enemy territory.”

Not only did Jesus breach the cultural barrier, He spoke to a woman alone in public, even a woman of ill repute (v.17, 18). John noted the time of day and that the woman was alone (v.6, 7). Women usually went together to draw water. The fact that she was alone signified her shame. She was an outcast because of her lifestyle. But the love of Christ has no cultural, gender, or social boundaries.

Jesus shared the gospel with the woman at the well by telling her about Himself, “the living water” (v.10-15). When she asked for this “living water,” Jesus brought her lifestyle to light, not to shame her but to convict her of sin (v.16-18). The good news of salvation is not “good” to those who don’t first know the bad news, that they are condemned by their sin. Sinners won’t recognize their need to be “saved” until they first recognize that they are “lost.”

The woman changed the subject and asked a question about worship (v.20-24). She wanted to know who was right, the Jews or Samaritans? Jesus basically said that they were both wrong. Samaritans worshiped a false god (a lie), and Jews worshiped the right God in the wrong way (with heartless ritual). Then, Jesus said that the time had come when people can worship God anywhere, at any time, in both spirit (heart) and truth (according to God’s Word). We live in that period today. We can worship God anywhere, anytime, with genuine, heartfelt praise.

Daily Reflection

The Bible says that once the woman recognized Jesus was the Messiah, “she left her waterpot, ran into the city,” and told others to come and meet Him. Meanwhile, the disciples returned with food, but Jesus did not eat. He told them that He was sustained by doing the work He was sent to do.

I love how this story ended. It all began with getting water and food, meeting physical needs, but it led to Jesus and the disciples ministering to and sharing the gospel with the whole town, meeting spiritual needs.

So often we are preoccupied with our schedules, our to-do lists, and meeting our physical needs that we seldom see the bigger spiritual picture. There are those around us who don’t know the “Savior of the world” (v.42). We are so busy with work that accomplishes little and has no eternal impact when there is “an entire field ready for us to harvest” (v.35).

What most preoccupies your attention, the physical or spiritual world? Why is that? What can you do to see the fields ready to harvest?

There is more important work to be done. We must “lift up our eyes” (v.35), **forget our waterpot**, and see the mission field around us.

A Kingdom of Light

January 20 – Matthew 4:12-17; Mark 1:14, 15; Luke 3:23a

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 20 – 345 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Jesus traveled to and began preaching in Capernaum, along the northern side of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was an important location for several reasons. Four of His disciples — Peter, Andrew, James, and John — lived there (*Mk. 1:16, 19*). Capernaum was also the heart of the Roman province of Galilee, a key city for Herod Antipas, and a major thoroughfare along the northern trade route. In short, if Jesus wanted to go to the mega center, where He could make the greatest impact in a short time (especially on Gentiles), then Capernaum was the right place. It was a dark place, but He would “turn on the light” (*Matt. 4:16*).

The Lord’s message to Galileans was simple, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel” (*Mk. 1:15*). Sermons don’t have to be long to be deep or meaningful, and Jesus certainly could say a lot in just a few words.

When Jesus said, “the time is fulfilled,” He was saying that the moment everyone had waited for — the coming of the Messiah — had finally arrived (*Gal. 4:4*). The Old Testament prophecies had come true. The timing was perfect, everything was in place, and the Promised One was here.

That’s why Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is at hand,” meaning it was near or here (*Mk. 1:15*). The kingdom of God has both a physical (external) and spiritual (internal) inference. Physically speaking, the kingdom of God is the reign of Christ on the earth in the future. Spiritually speaking, the kingdom of God is the rule of Christ in the hearts of His followers. The official opening of that kingdom began when Jesus, the King, arrived on the scene.

To be a part of the kingdom of God, one must “repent and believe in the gospel” (*v.15*). To repent means to turn in the opposite direction,

to admit or confess and abandon one’s sin. To believe in the gospel means to place one’s faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sin.

One small but important detail mentioned today was Jesus’ age. Luke stated that He was 30 years old. While this age connected Jesus to many Old Testament characters (*Gen. 41:46; 2 Sam. 5:4; Ezek. 1:1*), the ones to note are priests. Old Testament priests were mediators between God and Israel and eligible to absolve the sins of the people as the Lord instructed. To be legally eligible for this role, Jesus would have to be older than 25 (*Num. 4:3; 8:24*).

Daily Reflection

If you are a follower of Christ, then **you are a part of the kingdom of God**. One day, this spiritual kingdom will be a physical kingdom in which you will enjoy His presence forever.

But for now, you live in a place of darkness and death, a place that is hopeless and confused (*Matt. 4:16; Isa. 9:2*). **As a citizen of the kingdom of God, you have the light of Christ in you**, and you carry the good news of forgiveness of sin (*Matt. 4:16*). How are you shining that light and sharing that news with those who are living in the land of darkness and death?

Thank God for shining His light into your darkened heart. Ask Him to use you as a light to others, to invite them into the kingdom of God.

A Faith Journey

January 21 – John 4:46-54

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 21 – 344 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

Jesus healed a royal official's son. This man was more than likely a Jew in the administration of Herod Antipas. Evidently, the stories about Jesus were spreading as the nobleman had heard the news and went to Him on behalf of his son (v.47). As someone who worked for the king, this official would've had the money to provide the best medical care and cure, but nothing worked, and the boy was dying (v.47).

In desperation, the father walked from Capernaum to Cana (about 16 miles) to speak to Jesus. He begged Jesus to return to Cana in order to heal his son. Jesus responded, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe" (v.48). While this statement was meant for the people in Cana and Galilee, it also revealed the motive of the father. He did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah; rather he only believed that Jesus was a miracle worker.

However, we see what little faith the father had expand greatly when Jesus said, "Go home, for Your son lives" (v.50). The man believed Jesus and left immediately. In other words, the official had to believe that Jesus could heal his son without being in the presence of his son. **He believed in faith, without seeing the evidence.**

As the official traveled home, he was surely relieved, confident that Jesus' words would come true. Then, his faith was confirmed when his servants met him on the road and reported that his son had recovered (v.51). There is no indication of his response. He simply wanted to know when the recovery began. When he heard the time, he realized that it was exactly the moment that he spoke with Jesus (v.52, 53).

Certainly, the official was overjoyed, not only that his son recovered but also that his faith in Jesus was confirmed. He now shared the story with his servants along the way and with his

family upon his return. His faith was infectious and "his whole house believed" (v.53).

Daily Reflection

We must not overlook the awesome authority of Jesus on display in this story. He healed the boy without being in his presence. Jesus also saved him from certain death and gave him new life, a small glimpse of a very big God and a picture of the regenerative power of salvation.

However, the most convicting aspect of this story is the transformation of the father's faith. To believe Jesus' words without seeing the evidence is faith in action. Today, we have a saying that "seeing is believing," but **true faith is believing without seeing**. Faith based on sight is a shallow faith, but faith without sight is deep (Jn. 20:29; 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1).

How would you describe your faith journey? Is your faith growing or waning? Explain.

A journey takes time, and it has highs and lows; but ultimately, we will reach our destination. One day, we will see Him in whom we have believed, and **our faith will become sight!**