

The Water Blushed

John 2:1-11

- 1 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.
- 2 Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.
- 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."
- 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."
- 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."
- 6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.
- 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim.
- 8 And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.
- 9 When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom
- 10 and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."
- 11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

Why Do People Doubt?

There are many unbelievers in the world, people who doubt the truth and veracity of Holy Scripture, people who would like verification and reasonable answers, something solid upon which to place belief (at least, that's what they claim anyway). In recent years, Christians have contributed to the secularization of the western world by insisting that faith is a subjective thing, a matter of the heart, a shot in the dark, a leap into the void. As the apocryphal saying (often attributed to **Kierkegaard** or **Tertullian**) puts it, “**I believe because it is absurd.**”¹ When we pit the mind against the heart in this way, we tell people who want to use their mind in religion to check their brains at the door. The result is that in many places, Christianity becomes a touchy-feely emotional roller coaster of religious experiences, and not a lot more.

This is not the faith we find supported in the Scripture. The Gospel of John gives us its purpose for existence at the end of the book. It says, “**Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in**

¹ See , Soren Kierkegaard, Robert L. Perkins; *Christian Discourses* vol 17 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 45. The saying is often attributed to Tertullian, but it is a misquote of him. Kierkegaard seems to have been bent in this direction.

this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30). That might seem strange in light of Jesus’ words to the Scribes and Pharisees when he said, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign” (Matt 12:39). But John is not telling you to ask God for a golden fleece. He is telling you that God has already given many golden fleeces, and that these were given freely by the Son of God **under no compulsion** from anyone simply because he wanted to demonstrate objectively that he is the Glory of God and the Word in flesh.

Many of you struggle with your faith and continue to struggle with it because you have been taught to think about the truth of Christianity and its Holy God in light of your experiences. Thus, if you feel particularly high one day, God feels real to you. If you feel low and down and full of sin, then God feels far off or displeased with you. Therefore, however you feel is what you make the truth of the matter to be. If God feels real, he must be real. If he feels close, he must be close. If he feels kind and good, then he must be kind and good. But if he does not feel real, or

close, or kind, he must not be. Many then come to church wanting a great experience, so that they can *feel* right again, and so *make* things right again. And so the struggle with faith continues, because right thinking is not allowed to win.

Analysis

Today's passage is **John 2:1-11**. It is the “**first of Christ's signs**” (**vs. 11**), and so it hits exactly at the point I'm making about objective vs. subjective faith. A sign is something God gives to the world outside of a person's heart and feelings (though it often evokes emotional responses, which is fine). This story begins to instill **an objective faith** through a specific episode in Jesus' career. If you read and understand it properly, it can be a marvelous tool in the hands of God so that you may believe, and that by believing, have life in Christ's Name. That is what we want after all, so that we might worship him. Let us look then at the passage.

First, let us look a little bit at **the structure**. This passage is its own literary unit. Importantly, it begins and ends the same way, by referring to the *place* of the episode,

to *Jesus* and his *disciples*, and to belief in him (see **John 2:1-2** and **11**); the three ideas that make it a unit. I'll come back to this point in a moment, because it is quite relevant for how we interpret the story.

Second, this story comes in a larger context of what many scholars call “**The Book of Signs.**” **Chapters 2-10** (some include 11-12) make up this “book within a book.” The Book of Signs tells us all about Jesus’ public ministry. Curiously, there are **seven signs** of Christ in John’s Gospel (water into wine, healing a nobleman’s son, healing the palsied man, feeding five thousand, Jesus walks on water, healing a blind man, raising Lazarus from the dead).² In this book, *Jesus reveals his glory.*³ The second half of the book (chs. 13-21) are the “**Book of Glory**” where *Jesus receives his glory.*

Within the Book of Signs, there are subdivisions. The first is chapters 2-4 which begin and end with the location of Cana (see **2:1** and **4:46**). This unit consists of the stories of the **wedding of Cana**, the **cleansing of the temple**, the

² The number seven is intentionally significant since John says Jesus performed “many other signs” (20:30), but he only mentions seven of them.

³ See D. A. Carson, *John*, PNTC, 166.

discussion with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, and a couple of others.

Third, within this smaller unit is an even smaller unit which is the whole of chapter two. I'm not telling you this because I want to bore you. It is actually important. Chapter two contains just two stories: the wedding at Cana and the cleansing of the temple. Both of these stories are marked out in identical fashion. Like our unit, the story of the cleansing of the temple begins and ends by repeating the *place* of the episode (Jerusalem), to *Jesus* and to his *disciples*, and to belief (see **John 2:12-13** and **22**). One contains a sign he performed, the other a sign he will perform.

As they are *parallel* with one another, their interpretation is meant to be understood in like manner. The sign today is *water being turned into wine*. The sign in the next passage is Jesus destroying and rebuilding the temple in three days. But since they are parallel passages, the question becomes *what water is transformed at Cana?* Just

as it will be next week *what temple is to be transformed at Jerusalem?*⁴

I think many of us have not really asked the question *what water is transformed at Cana* before. It seems self evident. It is the water that was there at the wedding feast. Yet, we are perfectly comfortable asking what temple is to be transformed at Jerusalem, because John makes the literalizing of the temple by the Pharisees an obvious blunder on their part. He tells us that Jesus was not talking about the temple mount, but the temple of his own body, though the Pharisees didn't understand that. Since these two episodes are parallel, perhaps you might just consider here [what water is actually being transformed at Cana?](#)

A Look at the Wedding at Cana

The Third Day

Before we can answer that, we need to become familiar with the passage. As I said, we are looking at **John 2:1-11**. It begins with “**on the third day**” there was a wedding.

⁴ This structural analysis and question is from James T. Dennison, Jr., “John 2: Structure and Biblical Theology,” *Kerux* 11/1 (May 1996): 3-13. <http://www.kerux.com/documents/KeruxV11N1A1.asp>

I've been making a big deal about the framework of **John 1:19 ff.** The last part of the structure of our passage that I only hinted at today (in the number of signs = 7) is how it also completes what we have been looking at in chapter 1. This is the new creation week.

When read together with chapter 1, “the third day” puts us on the seventh day of the first week of Jesus’ public ministry. To put it another way, the first of the seven signs takes place on the last of the first seven days! The symbolism should be obvious. The seventh day is, of course, the **Sabbath day**, the day of rest. As we have been looking at the original creation in the other days, it is also helpful to remember that on the seventh day of the original creation God rested. But, as scholars have shown, this was not about God taking a nap.⁵ Rather, this was the king being enthroned in his temple. **Heaven is God’s throne and earth is his footstool (Isa 66:1)**, and what God has just created is his great temple. The seventh day of rest is God’s **royal** enthronement over the universe, where he takes his seat and begins reigning over his realm. In a moment, I want to focus on the royal nature of the Sabbath.

⁵ See Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 33-41; John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic Press, 2009).

First, I also want to point out that the “third day” is a phrase used many times in the OT. For example, it is used at Mt. Sinai where the people were to **wash their bodies** in clean water in order to prepare themselves for the coming of God on the mountain on the third day (**Ex 19:11**). Similarly, “on the third day” a man who had **touched a dead body was to wash himself** with water (**Num 19:12**). The “third day” is of course also used of **Jesus’ resurrection** from the dead in the synoptic Gospels (**Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21**), and is used this way by Hosea (**Hos 6:2**); but John never uses the phrase like this for Jesus. In fact, he doesn’t use this phrase anywhere else but here. All of this information is important when trying to figure out what is going on in this passage.

The Sabbath Wedding

Let’s look at the royal nature of the Sabbath. What we have in **John 2:1-11** is the story of a wedding. One of the characters in the story is “**the bridegroom**” (**vs. 9**). The master of the feast tasted the water now become wine and called the bridegroom. In the flow of thought of this new

creation and day seven, this first great Sabbath day of Jesus' new kingdom, it is no accident that we have here a wedding and a bridegroom. The coming kingdom of God is often described in terms of a wedding—a *royal wedding*.

Jesus tells the parable of the **ten virgins**. “**Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom**” (Matt 25:1; cf. 22:1-14). Revelation says, “**Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready**” (Rev 19:7). This is the mystery of Christ and his church (Eph 5:25-32). In all of these, the one getting married is the king, King Jesus. In other words, the Sabbath wedding of the new creation week in Cana is an intentional picture of the royal wedding of the future, for here is where Christ gives a first sign and his disciples (presumably the four mentioned other than Nathanael who has already done so) *believed*. If they believed, then they became part of his bride, his church. This sign was for them! Here is the first sign of the kingdom of Christ breaking into our world. This is a shadowy figure of the God in Christ becoming enthroned on this initial Sabbath day of the new creation. It is also

about Christ performing redemptive work on the Sabbath, something that occurs later in John's gospel ([John 5:16ff](#); [7:21-24](#); [9:16](#)). It is about Christ preparing the disciples for a greater wedding in the future, by doing a sign that will create faith in their hearts.

Mary

Of course, the story is more than symbolic. It is first and foremost, historical. There is a very practical reason why this wedding occurred on the third day after Nathanael was called. This wedding was *in Cana*.⁶ Cana is only mentioned in this story, in [4:46](#), and in [21:2](#) in the Bible. It is actually the hometown of Nathanael. Since they were on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee, they had to travel a couple of days to make their way to Cana, which lies between Nazareth and the Sea.

⁶ Some see a symbolic reference in the term "Cana" which can mean "place of reeds" or "zealous" or "acquired." Yet, even if it is symbolic, it is also perfectly historical.



We do not know the specifics, but perhaps Nathanael may have known some of the wedding party. The disciples were invited to the wedding after all. We do know that Jesus' mother Mary was here too. In fact, she plays a significant role in this story. Due to her role, it seems plausible that she was helping coordinate the wedding. No offense to **J-Lo** in the 2001 movie, but maybe Mary was the original *Wedding Planner*?

We might speculate that since she has such an important role in this wedding that maybe it was one of her younger children that was getting married. That would make this wedding one of Jesus' half-brothers/sisters. If that is true, it is striking and telling that John doesn't care to mention whose wedding it is. **Biology**

has no relevance in the kingdom of Christ, which itself is a stunning claim as far as Jews were concerned. Along the same lines, it is striking, at least as far as the theology of Mary developed in the church, is how Mary is treated by Jesus in this story.

We learn that **the wine ran out**. This was trouble, because ancient Jewish weddings could last up to seven days (**Jdg 14:12**). It was the groom's responsibility to pay for the wedding, and in fact if he could be taken to court if he failed to provide the appropriate wedding gift.⁷ Seven days without wine would be a bad thing, because it was part of the gift!

The gift was wine. It was quite expensive. I should point out that it was wine that was at this wedding and not grape juice (**Thomas Barmwell Welch** did not invent grape juice until 1869). **Vs. 10** says that the people “**have drunk freely**.” The verb *methyskō* refers to **inebriation**.⁸ Say whatever you want about how much alcohol was in the wine; it is irrelevant. The point is, people were getting

⁷ “The groomsmen's gift can be recovered through a court of law” (Mishnah, b. Bat. 9:4).

⁸ Louw-Nida, “A person who habitually drinks too much and thus becomes a drunkard - 'drunkard, heavy drinker.” Friberg, “To *cause to become intoxicated*; only passive in the NT *be drunk, get drunk, become intoxicated*.” LSJ, “*o make drunk, intoxicate, inebriate*.” Thayer, “*o intoxicate, make drunk*.” Gingrich, “*cause to become intoxicated pass. become intoxicated, get drunk*.”

drunk, as the master of the bridegroom says. And in fact, this makes the miracle all the more astonishing to him (and beneficial to the bridegroom), because he says “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the people have gotten drunk, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus’ gift to the groom in the form of wine ends up making the groom look amazingly generous!

But before the miracle, we learn of a conversation between Jesus and his mother. Mary came to Jesus told him, “They have no wine” (vs. 3). Being that this is the first sign of Jesus, some have wondered why Mary would have told this to Jesus. But notice, it says that this was Jesus’ first “sign,” but not necessarily his first “miracle.” I wonder, have you ever heard that distinction before? What is a miracle? Miracle usually translates the word *dumamis* (from which we get dynamite). *Dumamis* simply means “power.” Thus, a miracle is a display of divine power.

But Jesus has just displayed his divine power ... to Nathanael. When he told him that he saw him under the fig tree, Nathanael confessed Christ as Messiah and

believed (**John 1:49-50**). This was clearly a display of *dumamis*, I comfortable calling it a miracle. This is not the word John uses in the story of the wedding at Cana. Instead, he uses the word “sign” (*semeion*). **A sign is more than a miracle.** Signs have theological or eschatological **significance that miracles may or may not have (see vs. 11).** Signs are also physical in nature. What Jesus did with Nathanael was not physical. It was just a demonstration of his omniscience. In other words, while all signs are miracles, not all miracles are signs. Jesus had performed a miracle already, but not a sign. Thus, perhaps Mary already knew something of Jesus’ power as the God-man.⁹ What she was not expecting was a sign.

Mary seems to have wanted Jesus to perform a miracle. Clearly, Jesus takes it this way. He replies, **“Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come”** (**John 2:4**). First, take note of the way Jesus treats his mother. The word “women” (*gynai*) has no real equivalent in English, though some have suggested the southern ma’am. Jesus is not being rude or condescending, but neither is he being affectionate. He is short with her, but

⁹ Thus, comments that apocryphal stories (which indeed they are) like Jesus turning clay pigeons into living birds as a toddler are besides the point (see Carson, 170).

not out of spite or anger. John's point seems to be to minimize Mary's importance. She is simply "woman."

D. A. Carson writes, "Some have assigned her an allegorical role, representing Israel or the church, or have detected in her successful request for a solution to the shortage of wine sufficient reason to treat her as a mediatrix between us and her Son. On this reasoning, one wonders why everyone who ever asked Jesus for help and found in him the solution to some pressing need, should not be elevated to the status of mediator or medatrix."¹⁰

Mary is clearly more important than most reactionary Protestants have made her out to be. As the church has rightly said and the Reformed have believed, she is the mother/bearer of God (*theotokos*).¹¹ This is a singular gift of God to this woman and no other. But the Scripture consistently minimizes any kind of special role of Mary, especially as a redemptrix or mediatrix. We mustn't give into pagan notions about goddesses in attributing any

¹⁰ Carson, 168-69.

¹¹ Calvin, Luther, and Zwingli all held to Mary as *theotokos*, while denying her any unique place as a mediatrix or special intercessor. See Presbyter Basileios A. Georgopoulos, "The Person of Theotokos in Protestant Theology," *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (2009), pp. 11-14. <http://orthodoxinfo.com/inquirers/the-person-of-the-theotokos-in-protestant-theology.aspx>

supernatural qualities to this wonderful, but still fallen woman.

John minimizes Mary as anything inherently special by maximizing Jesus' words to her. First, Jesus says, “**What does this have to do with me?**” This has been a difficult phrase to translate.¹² “**Strictly speaking, the idiom asks what is common to you and me—i.e. ‘What do you and I have in common (so far as the matter at hand is concerned?)’**”¹³ Thus, it could be rendered, “**You have no claims on me.**” This makes what Jesus says to Mary a soft rebuke.

Jesus rebuking Mary! You see, contrary to Roman dogma, Mary born of an immaculate conception, much less did she stay sinless throughout her life. **Mary is NOT God or a goddess** (I know they do not teach that she is, but it

12

NAS, KJV	What do I have to do with you
YLT	What -- to me and to thee
ESV	What does this have to do with me
RSV	What have you to do with me
NET	Why are you saying this to me
NIV	Why do you involve me
NJB	What do you want from me
NLT	What's not our problem

¹³ Carson, 171.

seems a pretty easy implication).¹⁴ It is amazing to read the Catholic Encyclopedia's entry on the Immaculate Conception. It says, "In regard to the sinlessness of Mary the older Fathers are very cautious: some of them even seem to have been in error on this matter."¹⁵ Their error was believing that Mary had ever sinned!

What Mary seems to be wanting is to bring the kingdom of God through her son to earth on her timetable! She does not have in mind the things of God, but of her own self-interest. Whoever's wedding this is, if the groom runs out of wine, it will look bad. That was her concern. But as Carson says Jesus is "utterly free from any kind of human advice, agenda, or manipulation. He has embarked on his ministry, the purpose of his coming; his only lodestar is his heavenly Father's will."¹⁶

¹⁴ I was struck by one of the last lines in the King Arthur/Merlin TV series "The Mists of Avalon" in which the witch Morgiane (played by Julianna Margulies) is reflecting on the old goddess worship of her people while staring at a statue of the Virgin Mary in a newly christened church. She notes with a flicker in her eye how the old ways are not gone, only transformed into a more palatable version of goddess worship. Apparently, Hollywood thinks this is implicit too.

¹⁵ They cite Origin, Basil, and Chrysostom as examples of early fathers who spoke of Mary's "doubt" and "ambition." These are "private opinions" that "merely serve to show that theology is a progressive science. Or, maybe it just shows that they actually read the Scripture. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07674d.htm>

¹⁶ Carson, 171.

Jesus is not compelled by anyone to perform anything. Yet ... Jesus does perform a sign. This is the point of the story. It is a sign and not a mere miracle. It serves a greater function than just helping someone's temporary problem, be that of a half-sibling or even his own mother, it doesn't matter. Mary must not be allowed to use Jesus for her own purposes. Even giving birth to Jesus does not give her prerogatives over him. "She, like every other person, must come to him as to the promised Messiah, the Lamb of God ... Neither she nor anyone else dare presume to approach him on an 'inside track'", a lesson that Peter also had to learn when he sought to keep Christ from going to the cross (**Mark 8:31-33**).

This, it seems to me, has an important application in the way we treat Jesus, especially in our prayers. How often do we come to the God of the universe asking him our requests with not a thought about what his purpose might be? We just want what we want. We treat him like a genie in a bottle. Rub three times and get your magic wish. Beloved, we must consider whom Jesus actually is, and our prayers, as heart felt as they are, ought at the end

of the day always to be “according to his will” (Luke 22:42; James 5:15 etc).

Yet, consider the kindness of God even in the face of our presumption. Jesus did not give Mary a mere miracle, but he did not leave her with a scolding. Rather, he gave her a sign, something objective and outside of herself that she might believe in him. That is what Jesus wants; he wants his people to believe in him, even his own mother. But what is it that she was to believe? *What water was it that was turned into wine?* The sign answers that question.

Old Water Out, New Wine In

Mary suspects that Jesus will do something, but she is not sure exactly what. “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2:5). Even Mary stands in anticipation. So we learn that there were “six stone water jars there” and that these jars were for a specific purpose. They were “for the Jewish rites of purification” (vs. 6). This is the key interpretive clue of the passage. These are not incidental to the story. Jesus could have simply taken a few wineskins or some clay pots or whatever.

It is curious that in the law, clay pots could become unclean, especially when touched by a dead rodent or reptile. When this happened, they had to be destroyed (**Lev 11:32-33**).¹⁷ This was never true of something made of stone. These pots were large, each holding 20-30 gallons of water. Their size helps you understand that they were used for ceremonial washing, and herein lies the point. At this point, recall how “**the third day**” refers often to ceremonial rites, including contact with **dead bodies** and **the washing of bodies** in for purification or preparation.

Jesus tells them to fill all six jars (I see no *definitive* significance in the number six here) full of water—to the brim, so that nothing else can get in them. What is Jesus going to do? Wash the guests? What does this have to do with the need for more wine at a wedding?

No. They are to “**draw some out**” and take it to the master of the feast (**John 2:8**). Drawing out the water is often associated with drawing water out of a well, such as the woman at the well will later do (**John 4:7, 15**). It also seems to be what God commanded Moses to do (**Ex 4:9**—take some water from the Nile and pour it on the ground),

¹⁷ See Morris, *John*, 161 n. 29.

in what would later become the **first sign** of God to the Pharaoh. That was a curious sign in relation to this one. There, God turned water into blood. That sign would last seven days (**Ex 7:25**). That was the old age. The present sign takes place on the seventh day is almost the exact opposite in terms of what the sign does. And this sign is begins the new age. Jesus turns water into wine! As one poet put it, “**The water saw its creator and blushed.**”¹⁸ A great turn of a phrase.

Conclusion

What are we to make of all this? There is clearly a lot of symbolism going on, but it is symbolism that we don't have to speculate upon. These are signs, not miracles and signs point to something. What water is being changed into wine? The it is the water of the old age or the law. This is the point of mentioning the pots used for ceremonial washing. Earlier in chapter one, John said, “**Law was given through Moses, grace and truth through Jesus Christ**” (**John 1:17**). The law represents a way of

¹⁸ Paraphrase of *Epigrammata Sacra. Aquae in Vimum Versae*, trans. Richard Crashaw (1612?-1649), cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 5th ed. (Oxford University Press, 1999), 244.

approaching God in order to appease him. This is what the ceremonies of washing were all about. The people washed in order to be ceremonially clean in God's eyes.

It points us to this by also pointing us to Christ's death on the cross. Wine and blood are often used together in the Scripture,¹⁹ not the least of which is in the figure of the Lord's Supper. Clearly, there is some relation to Jesus own death in this sign of the wine, which is why he refers to "the hour" having not yet come. Though it has not come, the sign still points, however mysteriously, to that ultimate end of our Lord ... before the new beginning.

But the sign points past the death, even to the resurrection and the sweet wedding that Christ will have with his bride later on. "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10). Thus, it concludes, "The first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him" (vs. 11).

¹⁹ Cf. You drank foaming wine made from the blood of the grape (Deu 32:14); They shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine (Isa 49:26); the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress (Rev 14:20).

Believing in the sign of Christ meant coming into his kingdom on his terms, through faith that he is the promised Messiah. It comes by looking not within, but without, to the objective work of Christ in history. So do not doubt, but believe. Jesus' coming brings about something new, a new creation with new people and new rules. It is not that God no longer cares about how we approach him. Nor is it that God no longer wants obedience to his law. Rather, it is that the ceremonies of the law, the rituals, have served their purpose. That purpose was to point forward to Christ. Now that Messiah has come, he does away with the need for these rituals in the old way in which they were performed.

In chapter 3 John the Baptist will tell the Pharisees, “You yourselves bear witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. And so this joy of mine has been made full” (John 3:28-29). This was said in the context of washing for purification, the baptism of John the Baptist. Indeed it is true and you must trust in it, for

the law came through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2 Co 5:17).

Moses' sign brings misery, but Christ's sign brings joy and happiness! One points to death, the other to newness of life. Because he did not stay dead in the tomb, but was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, Christ has gone before us into heaven to prepare a place for his bride. He is preparing the wedding banquet and the new wine for his glorious kingdom. J. C. Ryle put it this way, "To attend a marriage feast, and cleanse the temple from profanation were among the first acts of our Lord's ministry at His first coming. To purify the whole visible Church, and hold a marriage supper, will be among His first acts, when he comes again."²⁰

²⁰ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, St. John*, 3 vols (London, 1957).