

JESUS CHRIST: THE SOURCE OF TRUE JOY

2 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there; 2and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, They have no more wine. 4But Jesus said to her, Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come. 5His mother said to the servants, Whatever he tells you [to do], do it. 6Now there were six stone water jars, designated for the Jews' purification ritual, each able to hold about twenty to thirty gallons [of water]. 7Jesus said to them, Fill the water jars with water. So they filled them up to the brim. 8Then he said to them, Now draw some out, and bring it to the master of the banquet. So they brought it [to him]. 9When the master of the banquet tasted the water that had now become wine, but did not know from where it had come, (although the servants who had drawn the water knew), he summoned the bridegroom 10and said to him, Everyone serves the best wine first; then, after men have become drunk, [he serves] the inferior [wine]. You have held back the best wine until now. 11This—the first of his signs—Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee and [by so doing] revealed his glory; and his disciples believed on him. (Jn. 2:1-11)

Introduction

Life had always gone well for Dee. She had good memories of growing up in a loving family in West Bend, WI. Dee had enjoyed a life filled with security and opportunity. Summers at Lake Michigan and a bicycle trip through Sweden as a teenager were “icing on the cake.” She had enrolled at Northwestern University because she wanted to attend a good school and find a good husband. There she met a pre-med student named Steve; they were married by their junior year. Everything had seemed to perfectly fit into place. In time the couple had a little boy. In the fall of 1965 Dee stared out the window of their Indianapolis apartment. Then she glanced down at her one-year-old son who was sound asleep. She had a healthy baby boy, and a good husband who loved her. Why wasn't she happy? (*POWER*, 3/10/91, pp.2-ff.)

Elizabeth drove a shiny new car, wore fashionable clothing, and carried expensive luggage. She was 26 years old, well educated, and well traveled. She had just returned from a six-month tour that had included a cruise of the Mediterranean and travel throughout Europe. Thanks to her job as an executive secretary at a specialist hospital in Saudi Arabia, she had lived like a princess. She had mingled with the rich and famous; dined in exclusive restaurants; traveled throughout India, North Africa, and the Middle East. What more could she ask? Yet, she was very discontented. (*POWER*, 4/29/90, pp.2-ff.)

Big Ed McGlasson was playing major college football, with the prospect of a pro career. He was doing what he always dreamed of doing. Yet he was not satisfied with life. By his own admission, he was miserable.

What each of these people discovered through personal experience is that true happiness and contentment cannot be found in the world; it is not to be found in the possessions or the relationships that the world offers. What each of these people came to discover is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true Source of joy.

According to John 2:1-11, Jesus used the occasion of His attendance at a wedding celebration to perform His first sign—a miracle that reveals something about Himself and the kingdom of God. By means of that sign, Jesus declares that He Himself is the Source of true joy and fulfillment. Because the Lord Jesus Christ is the true Source of joy, we can only find true happiness and contentment if we turn to Him.

I. Turn to Jesus, and You will Find Abundant Joy in Him

In performing this miracle the Lord Jesus made use of six huge water pots, each capable of holding between twenty and thirty gallons of water. He commands that all the pots be filled to the brim. Thus, approximately 150 gallons of water are now turned into wine. The Bible describes the joy of God's kingdom—the joy that is found in Christ—in terms of abundance:

You will show me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore. (Psl. 16:11)

They shall feast on the abundance of your house; and you will grant them to drink from the river of your pleasures. (Psl. 36:8)

Therefore with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation. (Isa. 12:3); note the plural, "**wells of salvation**"

The Bible tells us that the Christian enters into the joy of Christ Himself, thus coming to participate in Christ's own joy. As expressed in the parable of the faithful servant, the Lord Jesus invites those who are committed to Him to enter into His joy: "*His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your lord'*" (Matt. 25:21.) Psalm 21 is ultimately a prophecy of the joy and blessing bestowed upon Christ by God the Father—the joy that the LORD shall share with His people:

The king shall rejoice in your strength, O Jehovah; and in your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! ²You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips. ³You greet him with the blessings of goodness ... ⁶You have granted him eternal blessings; you make him glad with the joy of your presence. (Psl. 21:1-3a, 6)

The Bible tells us that God Himself is the Christian's chief joy: *"Then will I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and with the harp will I praise you, O God, my God"* (Psl. 43:4.)

According to the chronology of John 1-2, this marriage celebration and this miraculous provision of new wine occurred on the 7th day—the day of the consummation of the week, the day representing the final state in the glorious kingdom of God:

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (Jn. 1:29); John the Baptist's witness to Christ took place on the **second** day in this time sequence

The next day John was again standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶He looked at Jesus as he passed by, and said, Look, the Lamb of God! (Jn. 1:35); on the **third** day of this sequence John again bore witness to Christ

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, Follow me. (Jn. 1:43); this is the **fourth** day in the sequence

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. (Jn. 2:1a); *"the third day"* referred to in John 2:1a, added to the previous four, would be the **seventh** day in the overall sequence of days listed in John 1-2.

The fullness of joy can only be experienced when the Christian is received into the immediate presence of Christ and thereby enters more fully into the eternal state. The Psalmist anticipates this eschatological joy (i.e.; the full experience of enjoying God in the final manifestation of His kingdom) when he testifies unto the LORD: *"As for me, I shall see your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with seeing your form"* (Psl. 17:15.) The Apostle Paul anticipates that, upon his departure from this present life, he shall enter into a greater and fuller experience of the presence and joy of Christ our Lord: *"for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain ... I have the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better"* (Phil. 1:21,23.)

But as the Christian lives upon the earth, he experiences a measure of this blessed joy. For one thing, there is joy as he anticipates the great salvation reserved in heaven for him:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in accordance with his great mercy has given us new birth for a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—⁴for an inheritance that is imperishable and unspoilable and permanent, reserved in heaven for you ⁵who by the power of God are being preserved through faith for the salvation that is ready to be revealed at the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice. (1 Pet. 1:3-6a)

Furthermore, there is the experience of the heavenly joy as the Christian presently holds communion with Christ his Savior: *"[Although] you have not seen him, you love him; [and even though] you do not see him now, by believing in him you greatly rejoice with a joy that is inexpressible and glorious"* (1 Pet. 1:8.) By way of illustration, the experience of the heavenly joy may be compared to the experience of a Thanksgiving feast: You smell the food being prepared in the kitchen and already through the aroma you begin to partake of the feast, and you are even permitted to partake of a sampling of the full feast that is yet to come.

Turn to Jesus, and you will find abundant joy in Him.

II. Turn to Jesus, and You will Find Authentic Joy in Him

Having tasted the water turned into wine, the master of the feast rebukes the bridegroom for holding back the best wine until last. By means of the quality wine He provided for the wedding celebration, the Lord Jesus is testifying to the authentic, quality joy, He bestows upon those who believe in Him. In the words of the hymn writer, John Newton,

Savior, if of Zion's city I, through grace, a member am,
Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in Your Name.
Fading is the worlding's pleasure, all his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting treasure, none but Zion's children know.

The Bible testifies that there is a certain pleasure in sin. Even though he was tempted to do other wise, Moses made the wise choice, choosing *"to share mistreatment with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"* (Heb. 11:25.) The very fact that sin consists of deeds that are unlawful serves to tantalize and stimulate the sinful heart of man: *"Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant"* (Prov. 9:17.) But, as Scripture goes on to say, the pleasures of sin are temporary; they are only *"for a season."* And what are the consequences of such acts? The Apostle Paul confronts the church at Rome with the answer to that question:

... when you were slaves of sin, you were free from [the control of] righteousness. ²¹[But] what [kind of] fruit did you have at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? The final outcome of those things is death. (Rom. 6:20-21)

Job's friend, Zophar, rightly testifies, *"the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless is but for a moment"* (Job 20:5.)

Even the legitimate pleasures and joys of this life are temporary. Solomon in his wisdom gives the following counsel to the young man: *"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years approach"*

when you will say, I have no pleasure in them" (Eccl. 12:1.) Godly old Barzillai testifies to King David:

How many more years will I live, that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king? ³⁵I am now eighty years old. Can I tell the difference between what is good and what is bad? Can your servant taste what he eats and drinks? Can I still hear the voices of men and women singers? (2 Sam. 19:34-35a)

In stark contrast to the fleeting pleasures of this present world, the joy found in Christ is pure and eternal:

The blessing of Jehovah, it makes one wealthy; and he adds no sorrow with it. (Prov. 10:22)

You will show me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore. (Psl. 16:11)

The redeemed of Jehovah shall return and come to Zion with singing; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. Gladness and joy shall overtake them; sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isa. 51:11)

Jesus said to His disciples: *"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and no one shall take your joy away from you."* (Jn. 16:22b)

Turn to Jesus, and you will find authentic joy in Him. In the words of the hymn writer, C.H. Morris,

Sweeter as the years go by,
Sweeter as the years go by;
Richer, fuller, deeper,
Jesus' love is sweeter,
Sweeter as the years go by.

III. Turn to Jesus, and You will Find Joy When You Accept His Terms

We must learn from Mary's mistake. Mary initially viewed Jesus as nothing more than her natural son, her miracle-working son, whose task is to do her bidding. She informs Jesus that the guests have run out of wine; she implies that she is expecting Him to do something about it (vs. 3.)

Mary meets with a stern rebuke from the Lord Jesus: *"Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come"* (vs. 4.) Note that Jesus simply calls her *"Woman,"* not *"mother."* Furthermore, the question, *"What do I have to do with you?"* implies that there is no relationship or obligation between the two people in question. Note Judges 11:12, where the same expression is used to rebuke an unwarranted assumption of relationship or rights. *"Jephthah sent messengers to*

the king of the Ammonites, saying, 'What do you have to do with me, that you have come to me to fight against my land?'" In the passage of Judges 11:12, Jephthah is rebuking the king of the Ammonites for assuming he has a right to land that actually belongs to Israel.

Jesus wants Mary to realize that His true identity is that of being the transcendent Lord, not the subservient son of a human mother. We must never view the Lord Jesus Christ as our servant whose task is to make us happy and comfortable—such a view is tantamount to blasphemy. We must rightly view Christ as the Lord of glory and the Lord of our lives. By nature, we have no claim upon Christ, He is under no obligation to us; He has the right to do with us and to us as He sees fit—we are completely at His mercy. It is by **grace** that He invites us to enter into His life; it is by **grace** that He condescends to commit Himself to those who fall at His feet and plead for His mercy as they surrender their lives unto His rightful lordship.

Then we must take Mary's advice: she instructs the servants to do whatever Christ commands (vs. 5.) As soon as Mary acknowledged what her relationship to Christ must be—as soon as she recognized that Christ is in charge and accepted His absolute lordship—she discovered His graciousness. Mary came to understand that what is required, if we are to experience the blessed joy of Christ, is the acknowledgement of His lordship and surrender to His lordship. Consider the testimony of Ed McGlasson: "It is only when Jesus takes over totally in our lives and leads us into His good purposes for us that we experience real joy, peace and satisfaction." *VOICE* (A Full Gospel Businessmen's publication) October 1984; p. 6.

As a Christian, are you experiencing the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ in your life? If not, what may be hindering the flow of that divine joy? Could it be a lack of simple child-like trust? The hymn writer, James Mountain, expresses such simple faith very well when he writes:

Simply trusting You, Lord Jesus, I behold You as You are,
And Your love, so pure, so changeless, satisfies my heart;
Satisfies its deepest longings, meets, supplies its every need,
Surrounds me with blessings; Yours is love indeed.
Jesus, I am resting, resting in the joy of what You are;
I am finding out the greatness of Your loving heart.

If, as a Christian, you are not experiencing some measure of the joy of Christ in your life, could it be due to refusal to let go of some known sin in your life? Or, could a lack of divine joy be attributed to a matter of thinking that you know better than Christ what will make you happy, and consequently, you find yourself pursuing your own course rather than following Him?

Turn to Jesus, and you will find joy when you accept His terms.

