

The Decision
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John 2 – The Wedding at Cana

In this episode from the life of Jesus, his mother Mary tells the Lord that they have no more wine. He didn't want to become involved. Mary doesn't respond to Jesus, but speaks to the servants, saying to do whatever He says.

Whatever He says. A loaded sentence.

Mary has faith in her Son, and believes that His very existence on earth has a cause beyond the cosmos. She knows there will be no naturalistic cause-and-effect in what He has done, and is about to do. In this, though, she is consciously putting Jesus on the spot.

The servants had no need for prior explanation for what's about to happen. They're used to someone telling them what to do. But Mary knows something they don't know: She believes that unearthly power will displace time and process. Obviously, she hasn't predicted the mechanics of the result, but she does know there aren't the raw materials to make wine: there are no grapes nor fermentation -- which is a process that takes time.

She sees a need, and sees Someone there who could fix the situation.

She would perhaps have agreed (if she'd been asked ahead of time) that time and process are variables, not determinant. But she believed her Son was absolute-- so everything else was a variable. Her asking was a dramatic demonstration of her faith in her Son.

Jesus responded to her request, even though not specifically articulated as such, for two reasons: Mary is his mother, and he responds to her faith in him. He already knew what He could do. He already knew that He was able to respond to needs, and by so doing, to engender a certain type of faith in Himself. (It makes one wonder—did Mary ever get fed up with annoyances such as cockroaches and expect Jesus to respond?)

He would later often respond to faith in Him—as witness the story of the centurion's servant (Luke 8), the demon-possessed girl (Matthew 9), blind Bartimeus.

But Mary was the first one to demonstrate this kind of faith.

In the account, Jesus tells servants to fill 20-30 gallon jugs with a total of some 120-180 gallons of water. The passage indicates that Jesus just stood there as the jars filled. Then He told the servants to draw out some of the contents and let the master sample it.

It's wasn't just "good" wine (v. 9), it was so good the master of the feast wanted to know where it came from. Such extraordinary quality, such a precipitous arrival – it was a credit to the whole event.

But where were the raw ingredients for this wine? No grapes. No fermentation (involves time.) No mention Jesus touched the jars nor their water nor their wine. His outward interaction was second-hand, just telling the servants to complete a task.

I have concluded that this miracle is the picture of a result of a decision. Jesus just stood there and decided that water would become wine. His decision held: a miracle as decision. He decided to solve a a problem of no wine for his mother. Unseen, His decision involved many smaller decisions regarding, for instance, quantity and quality.

Though His first miracle, it was hardly an “entry-level” action. It was huge. It revealed who he was. For the first time in earthly history, a human’s decision autonomously became material reality.

In the same way, a decision became physical reality when Jesus decided to feed the five thousand. When He decided to enable Peter to walk on water. When He decided to heal the son of an official. When He decided—and His disciples of that decision—to wait past the point of hope to raise Lazarus.

That means that we have no choice but similarly to represent reality as end result of the Lord’s decisions, taking shape in reality.

Reality is not just how I represent or perceive it. Instead, it is firmly rooted in the decisions of the Lord.

- For instance, when Jericho was destroyed in Joshua, it was the decision of the Lord that the walls would fall out.
- In Numbers 13 and 14, the Israelites didn’t understand this about God’s power for His decisions to become reality. Apparently, they never knew this. At Kadesh, their lack of trust and faith in God, in His promises and power, became apparent. But Joshua and Caleb knew that God’s decision was already made and announced. No matter how things presently looked, knew that Israel’s future would be different. They knew the Canaanites would forfeit the land because God had decided so.
- Later, the Israelites would be in captivity 400 years, and then would go free. In taking the Land, and retuning to the land, His power alone would give victory.
- But the Israelites didn’t believe that nor understand that the decisions of God equaled reality, that’s why they turned back on the day of battle. This simple, crucial comprehension would have precluded 40 years of wandering. The 10 spies thought reality was rooted in physical components. But it was wholly rooted in the decision of God.

When Mary asked Jesus to intercede, she knew where reality was rooted.

If we read between the lines, we see He was reluctant but did it anyway. She had to have believed this truth about His decisive power to bring it up in the first place.

There's a source for a further, associated generalization in John 2: 1-11. This shows that the Lord was rendering to us the key to understanding God. We come to Him on His specific terms – the God of decision.

If we don't understand God as the Decision Maker, we can't fully comprehend reality. All that we see is rooted in his decisions. You can weigh, measure, use a microscope, but not see that reality is not thus measurable except as an expression of His decisions.

- Another biblical scenario in which this principle plays out was when Solomon was told by God that he was the one to build the temple (1 Chronicles 28), but that if he violated the principles and laws of God, God would be against him. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon began with an emphasis on material components at first, but at the end, he concluded, "Fear God and keep His commandments."
- A third example was when Peter denied even knowing Jesus, because he thought reality rooted in the material components of the situation, which he believed threatened his life.
- We find a fourth example in James 4:13, where businessmen believed that their own decisions about the future would shape that future.

At the Cana marriage, the Lord announced with wine a picture of reality.

Mary knew that the resolution of the dilemma – not enough wine at a wedding-- was not in the circumstance and the raw materials available. She must have known that ahead of time. By her telling Jesus that she saw the deficit in the situation, her understanding penetrated ahead of time into the real nature of reality. All of us must do this.

Before every day dawns with a tidal wave of experience, we must prepare. We will all have tests of faith. We must do what Mary did, and let our understanding penetrate into real nature of reality.

There's a discontinuity, a dividing point: The reality-forming decisions of God are one category, and circumstances are another category. These two are not the same.

We pray. Why? Why should we?

It's because we believe this: *Reality is rooted in eternal decisions.*

This concept has meaning for language: how we talk about the reality we see.

We can see this in the example of the Israelites at Rephidim, when they saw no possibility of survival at Sinai. First Corinthians 10 mentions the rock that provisioned them, but they couldn't see Him. Jesus decided that the Israelites would eat and drink at Sinai—fed, like us, by the decision of the Lord.

If the Israelites had understood the power of God's decisions to affect reality, they would have used different words to describe their fears, their survival, possibilities, and trust.

At Kadesh, the Israelite assembly insisted that it has to be rooted in circumstance. In 13:30, Joshua and Caleb urged action but the multitude said no. They had been swayed by the 10 spies who used language rooted in material composition.

The “new” atheists today, such as Hitchens, Dawkins, and others, insist like the faithless Israelites that language and reality be based in visible circumstances, not in eternal decisions. Even many Christians don't have respect for the miracle at Cana—when we root our church and other life decisions in circumstances, trying to stuff it all into the 3-sided box of material composition, what we see, to explain reality.

If our language is rooted in material components, we pay a price for this --we forfeit the true understanding of reality. Fear, frustration disappointment, pain, loss, depression, disillusionment -- if all of these things rooted in material components, we have no hope.

Those of the so-called Vienna Circle, positivist philosophers, said that language and reality must be rooted in the material. This is the basis for analytic philosophy. But all searches for truth and meaning are useless if sought only via philosophy. Nonetheless, such atheists seek to make their statements about science stronger and as a result, their ideas took over all philosophy departments in the US and Europe.

If you operate on positivism (formally or informally), you can't derive meaning from Scripture unless you come to grips with the meaning of the meaning of Cana: truthful language and meaning from the decisions of God.

I want to commit to the meaning of the miracle at Cana. God honors that kind of faith and honors such prayers.

John recorded miracle, and from it we can see that it deals with

- 1) language use
- 2) view of reality
- 3) behavior.

If you want a revival, look at that sequence. The messages of prophets took this profile.

- For instance, the message to Ninevah delivered by Jonah. Though the prophet was reluctant at best and disobedient at worst, his language use changed the course of history for a nation of Ninevites. The Ninevites show a clear case of anti-positivism. They knew that everything depended on the decision of God about their future, not in the material components of their wealth and political stability.
- For Hosea, he dealt with Gomer as she went after other men. God wanted to show a picture of Israel. Faithless Gomer left Hose for wine, silver gold, and sex. Her actions were rooted in the lure of material components. She thought she knew what was really real, what was worth throwing over a marriage for.
- Another good example is of Job as a preacher or teacher. Maybe he didn't see himself in those roles, but his words help people across time and across cultures, in spite of education, experience, culture and other factors. Indoctrination won't hold, but yielding to the decisions of God—even when you don't understand them—will hold you and help you to be faithful.
- In Genesis 3, the serpent influenced Adam and Eve to do something catastrophically destructive. Because they put into question and then disobeyed the decisions of God, they were killed themselves. Generalization: ruin follows those people and societies that do not respect the decisions of God – that kind of thinking, in a very practical sense, doesn't work.
- In a sense, the miracle at Cana was a warning, a way of alerting everyone about how to view reality. If Mary had a motto in this situation, it would be: Resolution of the situation is not in the situation. If she believed the solution was in the situation, why did she appeal to Jesus? All the “problem solving” in the world wouldn't get it done. You couldn't just send out someone for more wine.
- Many other biblical examples include the story of Jehosaphat, and how he yielded to the decision of God.
- Esther, similarly, saw that there was no solution within the situation she faced.
- In John 4, Jesus returned to Cana, and faced another situation which had no inherent nor available solution within it: the nobleman's sick son.
- Jesus showed in Matthew 9 two circumstances that had no solution within the situations: the woman with the issue of blood and the story of the little dead girl.
- In John 6, Jesus showed another situation with no solution in itself: a famished crowd of thousands of people who looked to Him. And certainly, the solution was not the loaves and fishes of a little boy, but the decision of a Creator who could make something out of nothing, and much out of little.

- The book of Daniel demonstrates how even in exile, a people under the judgment of God for their sins could be redeemed and restored to home because of the decision of God.

After the miracle at Cana, his disciples began to believe in him. The ground shifted, so to speak. Everything looked different. They saw Him differently. They began to understand that even His preferences could change reality. And by trying to see things through the eyes of the Decision Maker, they could understand reality.

This was more essential than “getting them involved.” It was more important than examination of relationships. It was a top-down organization, and until they saw the power of the One at the top, everything else was less consequential.

Thus we have access to a remarkable opening of the mind of people to the mind of God via the miracle at Cana. Some of it seems too simple to be true: Trust God and believe your reality is rooted in His decisions and nothing else.

The only way we’re alive is because of his decision. Metaphorically we are eating and drinking at Sinai because of His decisions.

What implications does such an understanding have for our behavior? We have to kick behavior in the pants, and put a ring in its nose, and drag it where it needs to go.

How gentle the way God teaches us via miracle of Cana. For Mary, her faith in her Son was vindicated. She needed to know the nature of reality.

Even Jesus Himself needed such reassurance as he faced His own crisis of being overwhelmed, in the Garden of Gethsemane where He prayed alone, trusting in his Father to raise him from the dead. Only power wielded by a supreme Decision Maker could make the dead alive again, and even Jesus had to yield to a superior view – “Your will, not Mine”—to endure the coming situation.

We praise Him and thank Him for that submission. May He grant us the grace to follow His example.