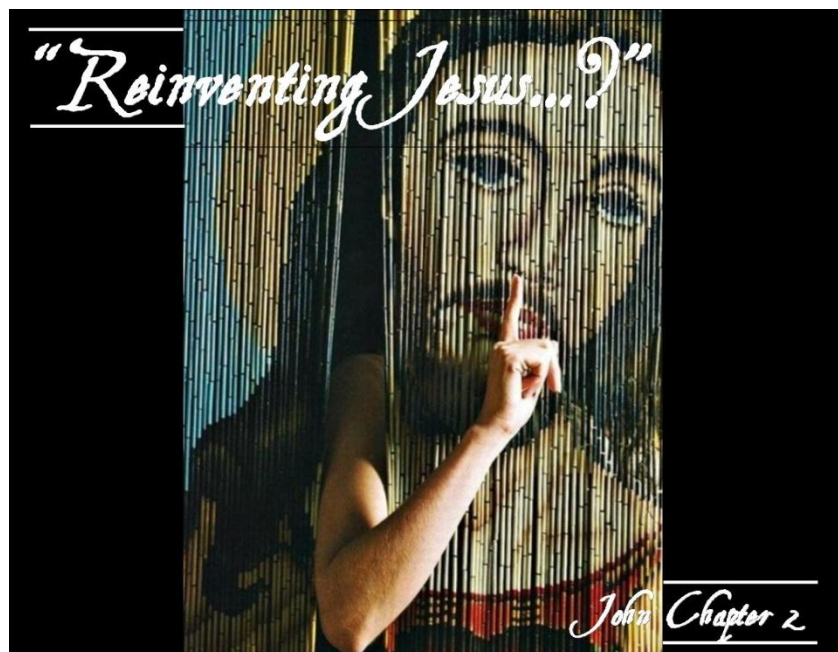


## "Reinventing Jesus...?" John 2

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(1) On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. (2) Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. (3) And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." (4) Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." (5) His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." (6) Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. (7) Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. (8) And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. (9) When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. (10) And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!" (11) This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him. (12) After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days. (13) Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. (14) And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. (15) When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. (16) And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (17) Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." (18) So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" (19) Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (20) Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" (21) But He was speaking of the temple of His body. (22) Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said. (23) Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. (24) But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, (25) and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

**If one were to step back** from the seeming randomness of Christ's steps in His earthly ministry, one would quickly see that while it may appear that His work was akin to the aimless ramblings of a homeless man, we in fact see a ministerial 'pattern.' Like the subtle revelations of 'chaos theory', one can begin to see almost a template of ministerial objectives, all tied together with one singular mission. Jesus would, with intention and purpose, show up at an event...a public 'happening', and would then engage both the event and the attendees in the cultural aspects of that event.

He would commune and communicate in the terms of table set before Him. Whether that was talking farming with a farmer, fishing with a fisherman, providing food because the people were hungry or wine at a celebration. He did not attempt to ram a message that was out of context down the throats of an unwitting people group. He wasn't knocking on doors on Saturdays passing out magazines. He was the "missionary" in a strange land. But wherever He showed up, he engaged the people and beautified the event. He was the quintessential individual 'on mission.' Sometimes he made everyone happy by making great wine and the next time He shook up the status quo by breaking out a 'cat-o-nine-tails' and taking charge. But He was never invisible. He was never irrelevant and inconsequential. Not just in the context of deity but as a *man*. He was *engaged* in His mission. He *mattered*...

Ironically, He lived a life that upset the religious “powers-that-be” more than anyone else. No matter which direction he swung, the criticism surely followed. In Matthew 11, Jesus spoke concerning that phenomena by saying “... *John didn't spend his time eating and drinking, and you say, 'He's possessed by a demon.' The Son of Man, {“Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself.} on the other hand, feasts and drinks, and you say, 'He's a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!' But wisdom is shown to be right by its results.*”

The fact is, this passage here in John makes a lot of folks uncomfortable! What was Jesus doing in such a scene and why would He make wine? A lot of church folks don't talk about this passage very much. I had a relative of mine once try to tell me that their wine wasn't like our wine today...it was just grape juice. *Ahhh...well, you will have a little problem substantiating that premise in scripture when such emphatically states the opposite!* We have an idea of the Jesus that we want Him to be, more than acquiring our picture of Christ from who He really was and how He really lived. We like to put Jesus in a box, but Jesus was “out there.” He lived his life ‘on mission’ because He understood why He was here.

Can we take away from this scene that Jesus was “pro-alcohol” or that we all should drink a lot of wine? **Hardly!** The Bible has plenty to say on that matter, and while there is no prohibition against having a beer or a glass of wine, there still is a mandate against drunkenness, as well as 1 Corinthians 6:12 which says ...while “*All things are lawful for me,*” ...*not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated (or controlled) by anything.*” Yet on the other hand, let's not put words in Jesus' mouth either. How often we try to get one or all the members of the trinity to bolster our religious and denominational preconceptions and ideals!

So what *was* Jesus doing there? Well, maybe he was a friend of the bride, or maybe he was invited and there were lost people there. Sometimes I think we have trouble finding opportunity to evangelize because we don't know any non-Christians and we never go where there are any! Again, does that mean we are to go hangout at the strip clubs and porn shops? **No.** But there are plenty of lost folks outside of those places. They go bowling, play basketball, go to the library, belong to clubs and go camping. They eat and drink and walk, talk, bicycle and consume coffee just like Christians do. They just do it someplace else and unless we go there we aren't likely to have much interaction with them.

A word of warning here: remember that while you are on mission and seeking to influence the world ...to be “salt and light,”... the world is also seeking to influence **you** at the same time! If you are standing on a chair, it will always be harder and less likely for you to pull someone else up to you and much much easier for them to pull you *down* to *them*. We all have seen those casualties, haven't we? The last we saw of them they were taking the evangelical stance at a house party someplace and now they're gone. So be careful out there. Grow up and arm up before you go in there, but if you are going to be missional you are going to have to go *in there*...

As the curtain rises on what is recorded as the first miracle of Jesus' earthly ministry, we read that His mom points out that all the wine was gone. Now the answer Jesus gives may give us the idea that He is dis'ing His mom, but even though such language may imply that in today's English vernacular, that's far from the applicational use in His day. Jesus used that word "woman" in other contexts such as with the woman at the well and with Mary Magdalene at the tomb. The Greek here literally translates- “*what to me and to you.*” What He's really saying is this- *what do you and I have in common on this issue?* The idea is that mom was concerned about human and earthly issues while He was centered around heavenly and eternal matters.

Jesus said “my time has not yet come.” “**..my time**”...or “**my hour.**” That is an interesting thing to say, as such finds itself as a theme throughout the gospels! It speaks of God's timetable in the life of Jesus, and shows that one's “life events timeframe” is important here in this linear world ...even in the timeless realm in which God exists! Everything “in its season.” Ec 3:1 says “*To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven.*” When it comes to our service on mission, timing *does* matter.

Jesus uses this expression in the gospels when referring to the time of his sacrificial death, and such would therefore skew any and all other events on the way to the cross. Jesus was born into this world to ultimately hang on that cross, and the certainty of that “event” would condition everything Jesus would say and do, even *when* He would say it and *when* he would do it! Our “day” is coming too, along with some great “kairos” moments on the way. “Kairos” (greek) moments are those epiphany occasions...those perfect or opportune times...those supreme passings of our lives. For Jesus, kairos moments mattered. At least on this earth.

Jesus no doubt could have gotten away with a big jug of Boones Farm at this point in the “multi-day wedding feast” that was going on here. No one would have thought any less of the groom for pulling out the convenience store stuff here, but in fact, it seems that *quality* is an important aspect with Jesus also. He didn’t (and doesn’t) just *do* the job for the sake of getting something done. No, God is an artist. Creation clearly tells us that. He's an artist and a masterful one at that! So you can bet that when He made this wine, it was the awe inspiring French stuff that you and I will never get to taste. Because the “master of the feast” was significantly impressed! Let us make note of that character aspect of our God: *Quality matters*. God does really good work. *Amen?*

“Mom” here gives some excellent advice...she says “Whatever He says to you, *do it.*” Don’t ask questions...don’t argue...don’t debate...just do it. Simple premise, though perhaps a more difficult follow-through! And notice, “Mother Mary” doesn’t say “...*and then check back with me because I’m the co-redemptor.*” Nope. Nothing about her chiming in in anyway. Now I’m not throwing her under the bus because this was one chosen lady. But please just note that she said to listen to *HIM*...

Moving on to the second story of the chapter before us, we see a very different Jesus than the Jesus who turned the water into wine. Very different events except to say that Jesus always knew what was needed for the situation at hand. Sometimes it was the grace of more wine, and sometimes it was to kick some butt. We like the first Jesus of course, and are quick to reject the second.

A lot of folks believe there is never a time to get after a situation in the style of this latter story. We live in a time when the emotions and 'feelings' of people rule the day, and we hear a lot about "abusive ministries" and "offensive pastors" because somewhere someone got their sensibilities wounded by something that was said. We are a very 'thinned-skinned' generation. No doubt there are ministries and leaders that are out of control and are running outside of God's leading, but many of these "wounded folks" just don't like to be corrected or held accountable, which is a difficult proposition in a church community that is called to shepherd, to lead, to teach and disciple. We are to be a Christ Family, and my earthly family had plenty of love and grace, but there were times it exercised some discipline too! Those who reject such a premise is bound to have some personal self-discipline issues as well as some social catastrophes! Now I haven't yet resorted to turning over tables and whipping folks with a cat-o-nine-tails, and as in all situations I must be very controlled and cautious when exercising any such "house cleanings." Yet, I also must at times have a firm hand if I am to be the man God called me to be here.

It can be hard to understand why this scene played out the way it did. It can seem...*well*, harsh to say the least. Where is the "Jesus meek and mild" that we like so much? *Ahhh*....that would be the Jesus we made up in our minds more than the one we find in scripture! Indeed he was gentle, gracious, and loving, but scripture also shows us a Jesus that had little time for hypocrisy and wickedness from those who knew better. Effectively, that meant the religious folks that, like it or not, represented the heart of the Father to a world apart from Him. Luke 12:47-48 points this out saying "*And a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn't prepared and doesn't carry out those instructions, will be severely punished. But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.*"

Please don't hear me saying that I advocate violence and personally taking such dramatic actions as seen herein. But I also don't want to be the one to insinuate that Jesus was out of control or out of line! He *was* and *is* God incarnate, and since this is His space, I bow to His handling of such situations. Yet, can we understand a bit of why He handled things this way and what was behind His actions? I think so. For the "church" at that time...much like it has today, had ceased to be God's house. It long ago stopped being a place that glorified the Creator. A place of worship and learning, it had become a bastion of hypocrisy and a mere pious club for the self-righteous and moral elite. It no longer held to God's Word but made it fit the social and cultural leanings of the day. And while the masses were ok with the new approach, God wasn't. So Jesus obviously thought it was time to do some house cleaning.

Please note that Jesus didn't go to some corrupt religious guys house and whip him. Whether a guys house is a mess, or even a spiritual mess, is really up to him. That's called free will. We could then gather that a 'home visit' wasn't on the radar for Jesus, and it's not for us either. But this wasn't *their* house! It was God's. This isn't *your* church either, even though we tend to use that language in another and rightful context, for many of us count ourselves as invested and responsible for the family herein. Jesus Fellowship of Believers is *God's house*....God's church! And therein lies the critical difference...the crucial "line of demarcation." For while you have the freedom to trash *your* place, you don't have the freedom to trash God's.

Some will claim at this juncture, that then it is God's place to keep His house, not a pastor or any earthly individual whatsoever. That's a fine premise, accept God called upon us to do it. Acts 20:28... *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."* 1 Peter 4:17... *"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God..."*

May I take you back to an old testament story ...back in the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah had come back to Jerusalem to restore the temple that had been sorely neglected. One of things he found there in chapter 13 was that a troublemaker by the name of Tobiah had been allowed to kind of move into the temple and live there and live there free of rent. Well, Nehemiah didn't argue the issue nor did he go off to pray about it for a few days and seek God to intervene. No, He took immediate and strong, unmistakable action. He took *personal* action. He didn't just take the position of, "It makes me mad to see how Israel is drifting from the Lord!" and then go back to his newspaper. He met the issue head on, because God had called upon Him to care of His house. Thus He personally threw Tobiah's household goods...furniture and all, out of the storerooms. Then he had the room cleaned and put the grain offerings back in there. Imagine how Tobiah must have reacted when he came home, wondered what that pile of furniture was doing outside, and then opened his door and saw his apartment filled to the ceiling with grain!

No doubt care must be exercised here. We need to be careful with anger, even righteous anger, in that we can easily excuse sinful anger as being righteous. But when we see sins or lies or false teachings that are damaging God's people and God's house, it is *wrong not to be angry!* To be complacent in the face of such evil is *not* to be like Jesus.

"Reinventing Jesus?" Verse 24 -25 tells us that *"...Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."* Jesus loved the people and He so very much loves all of us today. He loves mankind, but Jesus knows our tendencies. Left to our own, we invariably attempt to reinvent Jesus into something and someone other than who and what He was and is. We will try to make Jesus fit our lives, and arrange the church to support what we have built. Unless scripture is the final word, then it's the 'wild west' out there, and it's 'every man for himself.' God is the "same yesterday, today, and forever." He has not changed His mind, softened His message or altered his stance to accommodate the ever fluid culture. Despite the worlds attempts today, there can be no "reinventing Jesus..."