

Jesus at the Wedding at Cana
John 2:1-11

For so many Jesus' miracle at the wedding of Cana is an out of place incident of little significance theologically or salvifically. What can be made of it contextually? Who is it that has come to Cana for a wedding? And why is He there?

The Evangelist has gone to great lengths in John 1 to identify who Jesus is before He gets to Cana. He's the Logos, Creator of the world, who became flesh. He is the Life, the True Light; the only-begotten from the Father; Jesus is **the only-begotten God**. He alone can and does exegete or explain God. He is the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world. He is the Male/Avnp (which can be translated "husband or bridegroom,") who comes after John the Baptizer and yet is before him. On Jesus the Holy Spirit descends and remains, who will baptize in the Holy Spirit. He is the Son of God, from whom the Spirit flows, a river of life.

Not just "hearing the sound"—as in the Garden—but "looking" on **God enfleshed walking** in the wilderness of this world, [was it the cool of the day?], John said, "Behold the Lamb of God." He is the Messiah. He is the Son of God, who sees all things, the King of Israel.

All of this is in John 1.

Now in speaking to Nathanael, Philip refers to Jesus as the son of Joseph of Nazareth, but Jesus Himself provides the corrective in the final title. In the very last four words before the Cana narrative, **Jesus declares Himself** to be **the Son of Man**. This title (of all those included in John 1) is put conspicuously last.

On the third day, Jesus' first miracle not only shows Himself to be the Son of God and Creator, but just as significantly, **the Son of Man**, the Bridegroom of Israel, who will give Himself into death for His bride. Jesus provides the best wine for the celebration at Cana, fulfilling the responsibility of the bridegroom at the wedding—and Himself calling attention to what He has just done. Jesus tells the servants, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." Note that the master of the feast will give the earthly bridegroom credit for providing this best wine. He tells the poor bridegroom (who doesn't know WHAT is going on), "You have kept the best for last." In this way, the **true Bridegroom** has revealed His identity and immediately the wedding bells begin ringing for the Daughter of Zion, His Bride. For the heavenly Bridegroom – who calls Himself "the Son of Man" – has come into the world.

We pastors have been taught by Dr. David Scaer that the title "Son of Man" is Jesus' own self-designation as the substitute sacrifice for mankind. The Evangelist John would have us understand it also as Jesus' own self-designation as BRIDEGROOM. And it makes sense. For as St. Paul has learned from Jesus, to be Bridegroom is to give one's life for the Bride (Ephesians 5).

But there is more in John. So we must ask, "When and where is the Church united with Christ? Where does this union take place?" The Evangelist should give us the answer somehow. In fact, if we Lutherans understand the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as true and physical union with Christ, the title "Son of Man" should be found in John 3 and in John 6! And lo, there the title is most prominent.

As Jesus' words indicate, He is no longer able to act under Mary's authority or in response to her wishes, for He is betrothed to a wife: "For this cause a man shall leave His father (Jesus did that "in becoming flesh and dwelling among us") and His mother (which is being demonstrated at Cana) and cleave to His wife (that is, this world of sinful human beings including all of us, thanks be to God!). And they shall become one flesh." Isn't this absolutely

wonderful to behold and how much more to experience its holy reflection in the God-pleasing and God-glorifying physical oneness of the marriage union!

Mary, the mother of Jesus, like Nathaniel, and all Israel with them, had to learn to view Jesus **exclusively** in this role for which He became flesh, as Husband to save the world from their sins. Not just Israel, mind you, for you know what comes in chapter 3, “For God so loved **THE WORLD**”! **It is with respect to His union with mankind through holy Baptism, that Jesus next speaks of Himself as Son of Man.** He is the Son of Man “come down” from heaven, who must be “lifted up” to save mankind. Once more, St. Paul does not overlook this: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word, and to present her to Himself . . . holy and blameless.”

And does not the Holy Spirit tie it all together through the Evangelist: for John 3 ends with Jesus’ disciples baptizing and more people are going to Jesus than to John the Baptizer, so that **John confesses that the Bridegroom has come:** “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.”

Trust in Jesus, dear Christian, your Savior Husband and submit to Him in everything. According to God our Heavenly Father, He is the only Man on earth suitable to be the Church’s Bridegroom. Through faith in Him, in holy Baptism we sinful people of the world are purified.

For Israel, attention must be turned from the purifying waters of Old Testament ceremonies to the living and abiding “Word made flesh” and to the “wine” which flows from His veins, even the water and blood from His side, by which the Bride of Christ is created and sustained. Indeed, only in that Spirit-filled water and in Jesus’ precious life-blood can we find forgiveness of our sins and everlasting life.

Pastor Thomas L. Olson