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**THIS, THE FIRST OF HIS SIGNS, JESUS DID AT CANA IN GALILEE – Biblical commentary by
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John 2,1-12

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. 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 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.” This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

Towards the end of the prologue of his Gospel, John writes that *..the law was given by Moses, but the grace and the truth*, an expression that indicates the faithful love of God, *comes through Jesus*. So the evangelist announces the change of the alliance. Moses, servant of the Lord, had imposed the alliance between the servants and their Lord, based on the obedience of his law. Jesus, who is not the servant of God, but the son of God, will propose a new alliance between sons and their Father, based on the acceptance and the similarity of his love.

With Jesus the believer is no more he who obeys to God observing his laws, but he who, like the Father accepts and practices a love similar to his.

In the verse that we now examine, chapter 2 of John's Gospel, the evangelist announces this new alliance. "*On the third day..*" this indication is important, because it represents the day of the alliance on Mount Sinai. The day in which God manifested himself through the law.

"*...there was a wedding*". The alliance between God and his people was depicted by the prophets with the image of a wedding, God was the bridegroom and the people the bride. "*..at Cana in Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there.*" Jesus' mother was part of this alliance, Jesus no. Jesus was invited. In fact "*..Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out..*", the wine was an important element of the wedding .

An important moment in the wedding is when the bride and groom drink from the same cup of wine, wine represents the love between the couple, as it is seen in the Song of Songs. Well, in this wedding the most important element was missing, the wine was missing, love was missing. "*..the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."*The mother, that represents the faithful Israel, does not say "*We have no wine*", but "*They have no wine*".

The mother believes that the Messiah, the Christ, wants to give new life to the old alliance and therefore invites Him to act. "*And Jesus said to her, "Woman,.."*

A son never calls the mother "Woman", which means wife, a married woman. Jesus in John's Gospel refers to three women in this way. Three women that represent the three brides of God. To the mother, that represents the always faithful bride, the Samaritan woman, the adulterous bride that the groom has recuperated with an offer of a greater love, and finally Mary Magdalene, who represents the bride of the new community.

"*Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.*" Jesus tells His mother to leave the past behind. Jesus' work does not rely on the old institution, but brings a radical novelty in the relation between God and mankind, that cannot be contemplated in the old alliance.

Therefore Jesus' hour will be that of His death. On the cross this new alliance will be sanctified. "*His mother said to the servants..*" and here the evangelist repeats in the words of the mother, what the people said to Moses in the view of the announcement of the new alliance. The people had said: "*All that the Lord has spoken we will do*"(Exodus 19, 7) and the mother says to the servants, "*Do whatever he tells you.*"

In the middle of the phrase there is the motive that explains why the wine is missing, because love is missing. "*Now there were six stone water jars..*" number six indicates that which is incomplete, "*..stone..*" like the tablets of the commandments, the law, "*..there for the Jewish rites of purification.*" If the alliance between God and the people was based on the observance of the law, of rules, it would happen that this would increase only a sense of guilt in the people that were not able to fulfill, in who did not observe and practice what the law said.

This made them always feel unworthy. In a relation with God in which man feels always guilty, unworthy, always with a growing inadequacy, how can they experience God's love?

So here in the middle of the phrase the evangelist puts these six stone jars for the Jewish purification, *"..each holding twenty or thirty gallons."* a disproportionate measure, to indicate that the people feel themselves always guilty and always in need to purify themselves, asking for forgiveness.

"And Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water."" The jars are empty therefore useless, so the purification through an external rite is also useless. Purification is not done with a rite external to mankind, water, but the changing internally of mankind through the experience of the unconditional love of God that Jesus will now do.

" And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast."" These wedding feasts that lasted days were presided over by one called the "arcitriclino", that here in the Gospel represents the leaders of the people. Those that should look after the needs of the people and were not aware of the lack of love.

"So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine,.." The jars will never contain wine, expression of the love of Jesus, but water – as the evangelist will say later – it becomes wine when it comes out of the jar.

" So they took it. 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 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."

For the director of the feast, the good and the beautiful belong to the past, the old alliance. They are amazed that the good and beautiful must still come. For this the bridegroom is criticizes, for this unusual order of serving the wine. First the good wine, then when everyone is slightly tipsy, the not so good wine is served. Therefore for the authority the good belongs to the past.

The conclusion, *"This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory"* In this proposal and this offer of the new alliance, Jesus manifests His glory, exactly as God manifested his glory on Sinai . In the old alliance God's glory manifested itself through the law, in the new alliance through a continual and ever growing offer of love.

In the first alliance mankind had to deserve God's love, in the new alliance this wine is given freely. God's love does not look at mans merits but his needs.