

Jesus - Millenium Man (1)

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[0 : 00] As we come to your word, you may help us to find in it great riches, that we may taste your love, believe and live.

Amen. Please be seated. Well, these four studies this year are going to look at some chapters in John's Gospel.

Chapter 2, obviously, tonight and then the next three weeks looking at chapters 4, 6 and 7. There's no great logic in picking those chapters.

I don't really know why we're doing 2, 4, 6 and 7 but we are. And this chapter begins Jesus' public ministry. Chapter 1 is a sort of prologue and introduction at two levels.

The first part of chapter 1 which is very well known about in the beginning was the word, in a sense introduces Jesus in a cosmic sort of way and then from verse 19 to 51 in a more earthly way in a sense.

[1 : 05] Jesus being introduced by John the Baptist and then various disciples meeting him and introducing other friends or brothers to him. And throughout chapter 1 there's a whole series of statements about Jesus or titles given to Jesus that are sort of stacked up, so to speak, culminating at the end of chapter 1 with the title that Jesus himself uses for himself.

All the others are given to him by others. They're all right. Jesus' title is to call himself the Son of Man. And he says to Nicodemus, not Nicodemus, sorry, Nathaniel at the end of chapter 1, do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree, you will see greater things than these?

Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. That I think is meant to lead us into chapter 2.

It's after all the end of chapter 1 and I think it's giving us an indication about what's going to happen not only in chapter 2 but in the chapters that follow. These are the greater things, not just this chapter but the whole of the rest of the gospel.

And what we see here in various ways are angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. In chapters 2 onwards for the first few episodes we see a transition from old to new.

[2 : 35] We see firstly at Cana old purification laws giving way to something new, the wine of the new kingdom. We see later in chapter 2 tonight the old temple giving way to a new temple.

In chapter 3 if we were studying that we see an old birth so to speak giving way to new birth and so on. And one of the things we see through John's gospel more generally is a whole series of strands from the Old Testament being brought together in focus on Jesus Christ.

We saw some of those on Sunday here at Holy Trinity in chapter 1. We'll see more of those tonight and in the weeks to come as well. As though John is writing his gospel compiling things that show all the major themes of the Old Testament, find their fulfilment or goal or culmination in Jesus Christ.

The first part of tonight's chapter is the wedding at Cana verses 1 to 11. I think the first thing to say about this is that this is an unusual miracle.

It's unusual because most of Jesus' miracles have an element of compassion about them or an element of desperation on the part of the recipients.

[4 : 00] And they're always, almost without exception, fairly public and sometimes controversial. But those features aren't really in this miracle of turning water into wine.

It's not a hugely public miracle, although probably there are quite a number of people there. There's no desperate need. Nobody's dying because they're lacking wine.

Nobody's ill and needs wine for healing. Really, at one level, you could say that all Jesus' miracle does is save the host or the bridegroom from social embarrassment.

And there are some people who've written about this chapter that ponder really was this worth doing because it doesn't seem to be that significant. Or is it rather that there is more going on underneath here?

John's Gospel is easily read at a surface level and lots of truth gained from that. But John, I think, especially of all the Gospel writers, has a lot of undercurrents as well, deliberately and sometimes subtly.

[5 : 14] And I'm sure that that is the case here. A clue for that being the case is that he calls this miracle a sign. In verse 11, Jesus did this, the first of his signs in Cana of Galilee and revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him.

Now in Matthew, Mark and Luke, Gospels that are very similar to each other, often they're called the synoptic Gospels because they look at things with the same eye, optic being eye and sin being a Greek preposition for with or together.

So if I use the term synoptics, that's what I mean, Matthew, Mark and Luke. John's very different from those Gospels. And in Matthew, Mark and Luke, the miracles are often called miracles or wonders or something like that.

But John, by using the word signs, seems to be using them in a particular way. That is, the miracles are actually pointing to something else, rather than in a sense standing on their own as something.

John is trying to push beyond the miracle to some further significance or importance. To use slightly technical language, just for one or two sentences, in Matthew, Mark and Luke, the miracles often are eschatological.

[6 : 29] That is, they are saying the end has arrived. The kingdom is here. But in John, his concern is not so much the end is here as what they're pointing to about Jesus.

So the technical word for that would be they're Christological. They are pointing to something about Christ rather than just simply saying the end is here, though there is an element of the former as well, as we'll see.

Now, if that's too technical for you, I've stopped using technical language and we'll come back to John chapter 2, verse 1. We're told it's on the third day. And, well, when we hear on the third day, I guess in our minds we think, oh, well, on the third day Jesus rose.

And that's the big third day in the Bible. And there are plenty of commentators and scholars who think this is a clue. We're meant to think of resurrection here. And resurrection does occur later on.

But maybe that's reading too much into it. There are others who say, if you read through the second half of chapter 1, beginning from verse 19 when John the Baptist is there, and then if you look in, say, verse 29 of chapter 1, the next day, and then verse 35, the next day, and then verse 43, the next day, and now we get on the third day.

[7 : 48] And if you add all them up, you get to six days, and then people think, oh, well, that doesn't look to be significant. Others then try and say, well, when Andrew and the other disciple who's not named go to Jesus' place of staying in verse 39 and 40, and then they go and find Peter, well, that must be the next day because it's late on the day they go there.

So that would end up with seven days. And here we have a week. And isn't that significant? Well, I'm not sure that it is. But having said that, John's Gospel does start in the beginning.

And that's a deliberate echo of Genesis 1. And maybe John has all these little undercurrents, and maybe he's saying here, here is a week, Jesus' first week of adult ministry.

It's a new beginning. Maybe he's hinting at that. Maybe. I don't want to read too much into that. The people of this episode in Cana of Galilee are not named.

They're relatively unimportant. Mary, Jesus' mother, is there, but she's not even named. It's just the mother of Jesus. Probably they're poor. Cana was fairly insignificant.

[9 : 01] It still is. There are some people here tonight who've been with me in Israel late last year, just a few weeks ago, really. And we drove through Cana. It's not that big a place. We didn't stop because it's not really worth stopping at.

In Jesus' day, it was just a Galilean village up in the hills, a few miles from the Sea of Galilee and not all that far from Nazareth, where Jesus' childhood was probably spent.

But it's typical of God, isn't it, to do significant things in unlikely places. Now, I know Jerusalem's very important and Jesus dies there, but Bethlehem was completely insignificant when Jesus was born and Nazareth was completely insignificant as well.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Nathaniel said, well, he came from Cana and there might have been a sort of, you know, little inter-village rivalry because they're not all that far apart. They probably played football against each other every Saturday or Friday or whatever their day off was, if they had one.

But God does things in unlikely places and with unlikely people. It's always worth remembering that because we're unlikely people, I think, and, well, I am anyway, and God can still use us and work through us.

[10 : 17] The Bible's full of unlikely people that God uses or does things with. So, the third day, there's a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It's probably a long two-day's walk from where Jesus was down the Jordan to get there, but he did.

And Jesus and his disciples, we don't know how many at this point there are. If you add them all together from the previous chapter, you get up to about five, six, or seven maybe, depending on how you number them. And there might well be others that are there that may even bring us up to 12.

We don't know. John never actually adds the 12 together as far as a calling, although the 12 are there later on by the time you get to chapter six onwards. And Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

It's worth mentioning, I mean, it's pretty insignificant, but it's funny what commentators do. Why did the wine run out? Well, there are people who say, well, Jesus brought his whole entourage there. No wonder the wine ran out.

Well, what a lot of nonsense. They're all invited, we're told here. So we're going to let the text speak for itself and tell us Jesus and his disciples are there. The wine didn't run out because all these extra bods just happened to turn up.

[11 : 25] When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, they have no wine. Weddings could last a week in those days. And those of us who think that weddings already last long enough in our society, well, we'd be horrified if it'd last a week.

And they'd be financed by the groom. To run out of wine or anything for that matter would be an issue of great shame. In fact, it was not unknown for there to be lawsuits against grooms whose supplies ran out during the wedding feast.

And of course, there's a lot of reciprocity in those sort of smaller communities. So somebody's child gets married and they have a big feast and everybody gets invited and if their stuff didn't run out and now you've got to invite them back and got to make sure that you have the same number of supplies and all that sort of thing.

This wedding, the wine ran out. It's a bit scandalous. We're not told why. We're not told that they're particularly poor. All of that is insignificant. We've got to remember that the Bible tells us what we need and it leaves lots of things unsaid because we don't need to know that.

But certainly in that society there would be great shame if you were the host or the groom and your wine ran out at your wedding feast. Now there are some people who say, let me jump ahead for a minute, that really this is so trivial because it's just dealing with somebody's shame and of course wine in those days was so weak and diluted this is not really worth recording.

[12 : 58] I remember a very sceptical, he called himself an atheist but he wasn't, a friend of mine at university who said, oh this is nonsense because wine then wasn't even alcoholic. Well, in a sense the miracle stands whether it's water into cordial but it was alcoholic, it was diluted probably, that's what they would drink but we shouldn't sort of dismiss the miracle too quickly here even though we think, oh well their wine in those days was very weak.

In Jesus' day you would drink water or wine. You couldn't go to the shop and buy Coke and Sprite and 7-Up and Pepsi and, and, and, and. You really had two choices, water or wine.

So wine was actually quite significant. Now Mary's response is odd as well. She says to Jesus, they've run out of wine. Now is she just passing on useful information to Jesus?

Well, there are some who say that. I mean, why does she go to Jesus and say they've no wine? Jesus has yet to perform a miracle. Well, according to John, this is the first of his signs.

So it's not as though Jesus has got a case history of changing water into all sorts of drinks and Mary's come up with a solution. Now maybe she knows and believes that Jesus can actually do something about it.

[14 : 21] maybe she just relies on him because he's resourceful. It may well be something that Joseph has died by this time. He's not really ever mentioned as a person currently existing in the Gospels, I think.

And, and Jesus as the eldest child may well be the one on whom really running the family may, may have fallen. Now that could well be the case, but we're speculating a little bit in saying that.

But maybe Mary has just told him because, you know, he's the sort of person who can solve problems. He's resourceful. Maybe he's the one that she's always relying on.

It does seem to indicate that Mary has some role in this wedding. Maybe in the catering, maybe it's a very close family friend. And I guess even today when people have weddings, their close family friends get caught up into the frenzy of it all often.

And maybe that's what's happening for Mary. Certainly in verse five, she tells the servants, do whatever he tells you. So Mary seems to have some sort of role in this wedding. Maybe that's why she's approaching Jesus.

[15 : 26] There are some, as I've said, who think that the wine ran out because Jesus brought too many of his friends. And maybe some think that she's blaming him. Their wine's run out. Look what you've done now.

You brought all your friends, you've drunk all the wine and it's run out. I don't think that's what's going on. I think she's just telling Jesus what the situation is. She may not really quite expect a miracle, but she probably knows something special about Jesus.

I mean, after all, she heard angels speaking to her when she conceived. And of course, Jesus has just gathered all these disciples. He's been baptised. That's caused a furor down in Galilee, but it's hard to imagine his own disciples keeping quiet when they got to Galilee about it all.

So probably there are just sort of glimmers of something. Can Jesus do something here? Jesus responds to her and this is I think almost impossible to translate into easy English.

In the version I've got here, the NRSV, and Jesus said to her, Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come. Now it would be easy to read that in English and think Jesus is being almost rude here.

[16 : 37] Woman! It's very hard to translate that. I mean that's literally what the word is. It's a courteous way of addressing his mother, but it's not a term of intimacy or endearment.

If we use the term woman, whether to your mother or to another woman, it would be either a put down or something a little bit rude. Jesus is not being rude here.

He may be being a little bit abrupt. He's certainly distancing himself a little bit from his mother, but he's not being rude to her. He's not putting her down either.

It's very hard to get the right sense of that word, even though it's a simple word. But in saying, Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?

That's an idiomatic expression that Jesus seems to be distancing himself from her. Why involve me in this? We don't share this same concern. He is slightly distancing himself and probably he's doing that because now is the time for his public ministry.

[17 : 43] And now primarily, he is, as he's just told Nathaniel a couple of days earlier, the son of man. Not the son of Mary. The son of man. And so now Jesus is seeing himself and wanting to be seen as God's son, acting under God's authority, not acting perhaps under Mary's influence and independence of her.

He says to her, My time, or my hour, literally, has not yet come. Now that seems to be saying, I'm not going to do anything about it because it's not the right time and then of course he does a miracle.

So what is he saying here when he says, My hour has not yet come? Well that's an expression that occurs many times in this gospel. You may like to flip over just briefly, we'll just flip through about five of these in order.

John 7 verse 6. Top of page 8, 6, 9 if you're using the church Bibles. Jesus' brothers are wanting him to go to a feast in Jerusalem and he says to them, My time has not yet come but your time is always here.

And then just down to verse 8, Go to the festival yourselves. I'm not going to this festival for my time has not yet fully come. The intriguing thing is that he goes to the festival.

[19 : 11] And then a bit further on, the same page, verse 30 on the next column, Then they tried to arrest him but no one laid hands on him because his hour had not yet come. I don't think that means that all these authorities said to each other, Oh, we can't touch him because his hour hasn't come.

Somehow God is protecting him in that situation because his hour has not yet come. If you flip over the page to chapter 8 verse 20, Jesus spoke these words while he was teaching in the treasury of the temple but no one arrested him because his hour had not yet come.

Again, the police or authorities didn't confer and say, Look, we're not going to arrest him yet. We'll have to wait a while till his hour comes. It's God's protection over him. But what is it talking about?

His hour has not yet come. Turn over again, a couple of pages probably, to chapter 12 verse 23. Now the situation here is that some Gentiles, Greeks, have come to see Jesus and Philip went and told Andrew and Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus and Jesus answered them, The hour has come.

That's a big change in this gospel. It's intriguing that it happens when Gentiles come to see Jesus. The hour has come for the Son of Man, the expression used at the end of chapter 1 by Jesus of himself, to be glorified.

[20 : 41] And then he goes on to talk about dying. The hour is to do with Jesus being glorified but that is to do with him dying and rising.

So I don't think Jesus being glorified means rising up to heaven. primarily it means dying. And if you look down to verse 27, Now my soul is troubled and what should I say?

Father, save me from this hour? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name. Again, you see, Jesus is troubled about this hour.

It's the hour of death. And then down to chapter 13 verse 1, Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father.

He's talking primarily about his death but with the consequence of his resurrection and ascension as well. And then lastly, chapter 17 verse 1, the end of the last night, Jesus has been talking to his disciples.

[21 : 47] He's had the last supper. He's about to go out to the Garden of Gethsemane. After he'd spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you.

The hour of Jesus is the cross primarily and it's there that he is, above all places, glorified. We wouldn't think that naturally.

We would think that Jesus being glorified would be resurrection or ascension but primarily it's the cross and that is where John's Gospel is heading.

Why does this get such an early reference here? Why does Jesus say to Mary, my hour has not yet come and then he goes and performs a miracle anyway? Why not just be quiet and do the miracle?

So there's something intriguing going on here. At one level, Jesus saying and John recording, my hour has not yet come here in chapter 2 is to create curiosity or interest for the reader.

[22 : 55] Now I don't mean to be dismissive in saying that but I think that's true. What's happening here is that we the reader and John in his Gospel is actually very up front about what he's wanting the reader to do.

He's wanting to whet their appetite for more. He's wanting them to say well what is this hour? He's wanting them therefore to see that this miracle is not the end it's actually pointing towards something greater and more important.

It's whetting the appetite by announcing an important theme. I'm just in the middle of reading a fairly complicated novel by Salman Rushdie which won the Booker Prize some years ago and at times I get excited by it and at times I get a bit bored by it to be honest but the trouble is with it it keeps dropping in little juicy morsels that made me think oh I really want to read this book because I want to find out what he's talking about because he keeps bringing things from the end of the book and just plonking them there and then saying but I'll talk about that later and I keep wanting to say oh I want to find out what this is about.

Where's this book heading? Now there's a sense in which that's what John's doing here. He's dropping in little morsels to make us hey I want to find out more. What is this hour? Where is this Gospel headed?

But it's not just a rhetorical device of course because Jesus said it and it had some importance for him and for his life and so on. It's anticipating the hour to come.

[24 : 25] What's going to happen here with this miracle is not the end in itself but it's a foretaste it's the little juicy morsel that is associated with the end event.

Now I've already told you what the end event is because we've run through those hours and we've seen that the hour is the cross and that leads to the resurrection. So there's something here about this miracle that is pointing to the cross and itself is a foretaste of it.

It's anticipating it. The other thing about this sequence of the hour has not yet come the hour has not yet come the hour has not yet come the hour has come is to make it clear to the reader that what we have in John's Gospel is not just a whole series of incidents and miracles and conversations we actually have something that is purposeful and heading towards a particular point and climax the cross.

So everything has to be read in the light of that in the end. That's where we're heading. So therefore everything takes its importance from the cross and that's what's going on here as well as we'll see shortly.

Now I hope that's clear enough. Better move on. Mary responds with faith. She may have felt a little bit rebuked by Jesus' words to her in verse 4 woman what concern is that to you and to me but she goes and tells the servants do whatever he tells you.

[25 : 57] There's faith for you. And it shows that she has some standing in this house or in this role in the wedding. Now we're told that there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification each holding 20 or 30 gallons.

So we've got a lot of water jars. They may well be empty or half full. If they were full we've got 120 to 180 gallons of water. In that society for Jews before any meal you would have to wash your hands ritually to cleanse them.

Remember that we've got a wedding here and we've got probably a week and we've probably got a lot of people. You would need a lot of water for ceremonial washing. As well as that you'd have to wash all the vessels that you use for eating and drinking from and cooking and so on.

There's stone because stone is better for cleanness. Pottery things will not be as good for cleanness ritual cleanness especially. John I think is not just telling us what the case was but he's giving us a little clue of significance about this miracle of course.

The water that is going to be turned into wine is water to do with Jewish purification and cleanness. Ritual washing. There are some who say well there are six stone water jars that must be significant.

[27 : 18] We know that seven is the number of completeness. This is saying that something about the Jewish system is incomplete. That would be all very well if Jesus produced another jar but he doesn't.

There are still six jars of wine so I'm not sure that that really is an issue of significance. Verse seven he tells the stewards and servants to fill the jars with water and they fill them up to the brim.

No room for additives. No room for any sort of magic ingredients to be tossed in. It is full of water. It also makes it clear that this is a significant miracle.

It's not just a tiny bit. He said to them now draw some out. The word is used actually for drawing water out of a well and there are some people who think that what's happened here is that they've gone and filled six water jars and now they go to the well and they draw water out of the well and behold the water from the well is the wine.

I'm not sure that I quite agree with that because I think then the jars become pretty insignificant. I think the likely thing is that it's the water in the jars when it's drawn out of the jar and presented to the steward the chief steward who tasted in verse nine it's the water from those stone jars that has become wine.

[28 : 34] The master the chief steward is the master of the banquet the sort of MC of the night and he goes to the bridegroom because it's the bridegroom who's responsible for the supplies and he says to him everyone serves the good wine first and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk but you have kept the good wine until now.

Now this chief steward doesn't know that they'd run out of wine so he doesn't know that a miracle's been performed. He's just complimenting the groom on the quality of this wine and he's saying it's a bit unusual because you usually serve the best wine first and then when people's palates are a bit dulled they're probably not so sensitive to the lack of quality of the later wine but not so they're here.

He's saying you've got the best wine at the end. He doesn't even know a miracle's been performed but he's acknowledging that a miracle he's acknowledging that the wine is real wine and it's good wine.

So what we've got here is not just water to wine but we've got abundance because there's 120 plus gallons of it and we've got quality. Quantity and quality are both there.

See Jesus when he does a miracle doesn't do it in halves. He's going to change water into wine he's going to make sure there's a lot of it and it's good wine. Now that actually probably is important because the significance of this miracle means that what is changed into wine must be good wine otherwise the whole significance of the miracle falls apart.

[30 : 08] Well we're not actually told what the reaction of all these people was. Many of them wouldn't have known that they'd run out of wine but Jesus did this the first of his signs in Cana of Galilee and revealed his glory.

We don't actually know whether it revealed it to everybody because they may not have known but certainly the disciples saw and they believed in him. As I've said signs point to something of greater significance than the actual event and that's John's word for it.

There are seven or eight signs in John's gospel. Only the first two are numbered. There are a couple of healings or three healings feeding the five thousand. Some would say walking on water is a sign.

The raising of Lazarus is either the seventh or the sixth depending on whether walking on water is a sign and there are those who like to have the number seven so if they don't count walking on water then they say the resurrection is the seventh at the end of the sequence or it's the eighth if you've already got seven.

But as I say John doesn't count them beyond the first two probably he's not that fussed about the number. The purpose of the signs John tells us at the end of his gospel it is so that you may believe.

[31 : 17] Well Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book but these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God. Now John's not saying Jesus only did seven or eight signs he did lots.

Into chapter two he says he did lots of other ones. John selects some in order that the reader may believe. That's our job to make sure that we believe.

We can be totally confident that John is being trustworthy in what he's saying here. His point is to give substantial evidence so that his readers will believe in Jesus the performer or doer of these signs.

We're told that Jesus revealed his glory in verse 11 and yet in John's gospel the glory of Jesus is concentrated in the cross and again I think what's going on here is that this miracle of water into wine is a foretaste of what will happen when Jesus' hour has come.

The glory of the cross and we'll see how that works in just a minute. But remember that here John is saying the primary reason for this miracle is for Jesus to reveal his glory.

- [32 : 30] That's what it's about. It doesn't have to be compassion or somebody in desperate need. Jesus is revealing his glory. That's something that we should be expecting anyway because back in chapter 1 it talks about Jesus' glory.

The word became flesh and lived among us and we've seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son. And then later in chapter 1 John the Baptist's announcement using words from Isaiah 40, I'm the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord.

That chapter goes on within a couple of verses to say the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. So John is picking up themes from Isaiah I think and saying Jesus' glory here is being revealed.

But in Isaiah it's about restoring God's people to God. So this miracle is in some way connected to that theme. The disciples believing in him in verse 11 is I think meant to be an example for us to follow.

It's the point of Jesus coming in the first place in chapter 1 as well. Now what's going on then in this significance? Let me try and pull the threads together to finish off this section. Jesus' death brings in the new age.

- [33 : 43] That's the hour that this gospel is heading towards. It is Jesus' death that brings about God's kingdom and access to God's kingdom for people. In the Old Testament there was an expectation that the restoration of God's people would be typified by wine dripping from hills or trees.

That was just one of many ways in which it was described. We haven't got time but the end of Amos, last few verses, Amos 9 verses 13 and 14, talk about abundant wine as a sign of the restored age of God's people.

And other prophets, Jeremiah, Hosea, the same sort of thing. And Jesus in the other gospels talks about wine and feasts and weddings as well as signs of the new kingdom to come.

So what's going on here is that my hour has not yet come, means that the new age, the messianic age, the age of the restoration of God's people and so on, that has not yet come but water into wine is a foretaste of that coming.

It will only come with the death of Jesus. That is where his glory is seen par excellence. But now in this miracle that at one level looks trivial but at another is full of loaded significance, it is a sign of the new age to come.

- [35 : 03] It's not yet complete or here in its fullness. My hour has not yet come, he says, it is coming with his death but there's glimpses of it already here.

So the miracle is anticipating that. It's anticipating the end age. It's anticipating what Jesus' death will accomplish in the same way that healings do because it's through the cross that healing is made for people with God and so on.

Someone said it's a display of glory ahead of time, a foretaste or a juicy morsel so that Jesus' audience and John's readers will keep on reading or finding out more about Jesus.

It also reminds us, I guess, that this new age of God's kingdom or we might say Christianity or relationship with God through Christ is not drudgery or boredom or wowseryism or legalism.

It is full of joy. Primarily it should be characterized by celebration and thanksgiving and joy. After all, that's one of the fruit of the spirit.

- [36 : 18] Sometimes, sadly, I think Christians portray themselves and therefore Christ in ways that are not full of joy, full of dullness or gloom.

Maybe the celebration of this miracle and the emphasis on joy and festivity ought to be something that may be a corrective for some of us.

That our lives as Christians ought to be fundamentally, regardless of circumstances, joyful. Verse 12, moving on, is a bit of an interlude.

Cana's in the hills, Capernaum is down on the lake. Those who are in Israel hopefully can picture all this. 16 miles down the hill, underneath sea level. Capernaum is one way of saying it these days.

And that's where Jesus as an adult seemed to have been based. Peter's mother-in-law had a house there and it seems to have been the base for Jesus and his disciples for a couple of years before his death.

[37 : 18] They remain there a few days and it's the time for the Passover. And that's the context for the last part of the chapter. In John's Gospel, feasts are very important and I'll say more about some of them in the last of the weeks of this series of Bible studies.

But this is the Passover. There are three mentioned in John's Gospel. So clearly the events of here leading up to his death span at least two years, if not more. And the three great feasts, Passover, which is in our March-April period, roughly where our Easter is.

The Feast of Weeks, which coincides roughly speaking with the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles, which in our calendar is in September-October. Those three key feasts have their origins early in the Old Testament and they're pilgrimage feasts by and large.

And the men of the society were encouraged, if not told, that they ought to regularly travel to Jerusalem, to the temple for those feasts. In John's Gospel, Jesus goes to Jerusalem several times and always in connection with a feast.

He is being a good Jew here. In the Synoptic Gospels, we don't read of Jesus going to Jerusalem apart from as a boy until he goes to die. I don't think they're contradicting each other. They've just selected different material.

[38 : 38] A lot of what Jesus says in John's Gospel and what he does comes in the context of feasts. Remember, this is the Passover and that's why he's going to Jerusalem. He's going up to Jerusalem.

Literally, you have to go up because he would walk down the Jordan Valley, which is under sea level, and then go up a steep hill to Jerusalem, but also because it's the capital. And just like any Englishman will go up to London wherever he lives, there's a sense also in which you'd go up to Jerusalem wherever you live, although Jerusalem is fairly high up.

If you want to find out the origins of the Passover, then in Exodus chapter 12, you'll find them. And it's the time when Israel was brought out of Egypt from slavery under the leadership of Moses.

Various miracles were performed, including finally the killing of the firstborn of the Egyptians. And the animal, Passover animal that was sacrificed would have blood. You would daub the blood on your doorpost, and that would be the indication to God not to kill your firstborn.

And then after that event, the Israelites fled from Egypt through the parting Red Sea into the desert and eventually to the Promised Land. In Matthew, Mark and Luke, the events that are recorded here occur in Jesus' last week of life.

[39 : 53] And I would say that most scholars think that John has artificially put them here at the beginning of Jesus' adult life or ministry, I should say. I'm not quite convinced by that because the themes of the cleansing of the temple and the overthrowing of the tables are different here from what you find in the Synoptic Gospels.

It wouldn't surprise me that Jesus actually does it twice. Once here at the beginning of his adult life and then later on in his last week of life. Remember that in the Synoptics, deliberately it seems Jesus only goes to Jerusalem to die, so you could hardly have an event like this at the beginning of his life because it would destroy your geographical plan.

I suspect that Jesus probably did this thing twice. Having said that, there is a caution that not always is strict chronology preserved in the Gospels.

And so we have to perhaps be a little bit flexible there. But certainly the issue in John chapter 2 is about money changes and animals per se, whereas in the Synoptic Gospels at the end of Jesus' life, the issue that Jesus is confronting is about the corruption involved in those practices.

The den of robbers that you've turned the house of prayer into. That's not here. Jesus seems to be only concerned here just with the fact that there are lots of animals and marketplace around, not with the corruption that's associated with that.

[41 : 23] So there does seem to be a different emphasis. The reason why there are money changes in animals is because firstly animals are sacrificed, so you need to have an animal. But if you've travelled a long way, there was provision in Jewish law that you could buy an animal when you got there.

You didn't have to bring one from all the way, especially because you run the risk then of your animal becoming injured or sick and the animals that you sacrifice were to be without spot or blemish.

So I mean imagine if you've travelled along distance and just in the last little bit climbing up to Jerusalem your animal stumbles and breaks a leg. You think, oh, I've got to go all the way home now to get another one to come back.

Well, you would bring your money and you'd buy an animal at the temple precincts or courts. It's probably not right in the very heart of the temple, in the courtyard around it.

And then you would go in to offer the sacrifice. You could only buy an animal using Tyrian shekels, shekels from a place called Tyre. Now, the reason for that is not because, it seems, because they didn't have a Roman emperor figure on it.

[42 : 28] Some people think, oh, you couldn't use the Jewish currency because it had a picture of the emperor. How could you use a picture of Caesar for buying a sacrificial animal? Rather, it seems that the shekels from Tyre were pure silver and the others were alloys that were a bit, you know, you could never be sure what it really was.

So, it seems that you, therefore, would have your normal currency and you'd have to change your money at a money changes in the temple precincts into Tyrian shekels and then with your Tyrian shekels, shekels from Tyre, which is in Lebanon today, buy your animal for a sacrifice.

Now, Jesus in no place here criticises that practice, although he does, it seems, in the synoptic gospels later in his life. What he's complaining about here is the very fact that in the temple where it ought to be peaceful and quiet and so on, you've got lots of animals and lots of money changing and it's just commercial, not necessarily corrupt, just commercial.

We do know that at times they were corrupt and would charge exorbitant commission either on the animals or the money changing, but not necessarily the issue here. Now, I think there's a lot of significance in this event happening so soon in Jesus' adult ministry.

The prophets expected the Lord to come to his temple. Malachi in particular expects that. Now, we must remember that in our Bibles Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, although in the reordered Hebrew Bible that's not necessarily the Lord.

[44 : 14] In whom you delight, indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap.

He'll sit as a refiner and purifier of silver and he will purify the descendants of Levi, their priests, and refine them like gold and silver until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness.

Now, maybe behind Jesus' actions there, here in John, is that sort of expectation. Here is Jesus come to the temple but to refine and purify.

Who can stand? Well, nobody because he overturns everything and sends them all out of the temple courts and so on. Now, this is quite a sharp contrast to what we've just seen in the first half of the chapter.

And I think deliberately they're put together. I mean, they probably happen one after the other. But deliberately, John's highlighted the contrast. We've gone from celebration and joy and water into wine up in Galilee.

[45 : 13] And within a couple of days, we've got Jesus in a fury, really, in the temple courts, kicking people out, making a whip of cords or rushes or something and driving people out. I don't think he's being unduly violent.

I think if you're going to try and get animals out, you need a whip of some sort to get them out. I don't think that he probably used it on the people. I think it's for the animals. So here we see a different picture of Jesus.

Yes, his kingdom is coming and joy and celebration. But he's also coming as the judge. And here he is denouncing impure worship.

Now, we've got to remember that Jesus is not just gentle, meek and milder baby in a manger that's comfortable and easy to control. When Jesus comes, there is joy, but there is also discomfort for all of us, surely.

Jesus, the disciples, rather, remember that it was written, Psalm 69, zeal for your house will consume me.

[46 : 15] Not has consumed me, but changing it to a future tense. No doubt, I think, again, another hint of something that's going to happen in the future, of course, Jesus' death.

Now, in Psalm 69, David is the writer of the psalm. And he is full of enthusiasm for the temple, which, of course, his son's going to build. If you read it in Kings and Chronicles, you can see David does want to build the temple, but he's prevented from doing so because he has been a man of war and his son will build the temple.

David's zeal for the temple brings him ostracism and enmity from others of God's people. And David in the psalm is, in effect, pleading with God to protect him and vindicate him.

Jesus' zeal for the temple has done the same for him. It's brought him enmity and ostracism and some rejection. The disciples recall that psalm and now apply it to Jesus.

By linking David and Jesus in their minds, though it's not made explicit here, they're saying something about Jesus as the rightful descendant of David, the Davidic king, the promised Messiah, the anointed one.

[47 : 29] The issue changes in verse 18. The Jews then said to him, and I think that's meant to mean Jewish leaders, maybe the Sanhedrin or the priests, what sign can you show us for doing this?

They want a sign. Intriguingly, Jesus has just given a sign in verse 11. Now they want a sign. They're in contrast to the disciples who've seen something Jesus done and have believed and they've remembered the scriptures in verse 17.

The Jewish leaders are very different from the disciples here. Now the Jewish leaders, of course, have every right to demand, and that's the sense of what they're doing here, they're demanding a sign in effect.

They've got every right to ask for Jesus' credentials. What right have you got to do what you've just done? Is in effect what they're asking. They're wanting a sign to show them his authority to do all this.

Now some would say, well isn't the cleansing itself enough of a sign? And it's intriguing that they don't even ask anything about the morality of what Jesus is challenging. They don't think to themselves, well, is our behaviour here wrong?

[48 : 41] And yet having said that, by asking him or demanding from him a sign, there's just a glimmer of suspicion from them that maybe Jesus is right after all.

They don't just kick him out, you see. They don't just overwhelm Jesus. They could have done that, one person against many. But they ask him for a sign. So there just seems to be a suspicion perhaps that something in what Jesus is doing is right.

But they're not really concerned with the ethics. Jesus' response is very enigmatic. Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.

Neither the Jews nor his disciples initially understood that response. Destroy this temple. The word is to do with the sanctuary part of the temple, the holy of holies part of the temple.

He's not commanding these Jews to destroy the temple. He's not saying, right, you go and destroy the temple. I'm telling you to do it and then I'll rebuild it in three days.

[49 : 46] I mean, the Jews are hardly likely to do that. Nor is Jesus saying that he will destroy the temple. He's not saying to them, okay, the sign I'll give you is that I'll destroy the temple and then I'll rebuild it in three days.

He's not saying that. Although at his trial in Mark 14, some people attribute to Jesus the threat that Jesus was going to destroy the temple. They're wrong. It's interesting that the only place that we find evidence for anything like that is in John's Gospel.

Mark, you get the accusation, but there's nothing earlier in Mark like that at all. The only place we find anything that links to that is in John's Gospel. The Gospel that so many people dismiss as being unhistorical.

Jesus is offering a sign here. The sign is the rebuilding of a destroyed temple in three days. Now that's interesting.

Because in Matthew, for example, Jesus declines to give a sign except for one. There he calls it the sign of Jonah. That is his resurrection he's talking about.

[50 : 56] The same thing's happening here, but in different language, do you see? Jesus is offering them a sign, raising a temple in three days. That is resurrection.

That's the sign that Jesus is going to give. Whether you look in Matthew or John, different context, different language, but the same point of view. The sign that Jesus offers is a sign of resurrection.

Of course, the Jews don't understand what he's talking about. They can't believe his claim to rebuild a temple in three days. They said, this temple's been under construction for 46 years, and that's true in a sense.

Herod the Great started to refurbish the temple in about 18, 19, 20 BC, thereabouts, something like that. The temple had stood since 515 when Zerubbabel built it and completed it, and Herod the Great had extended the platform significantly and extended the buildings and built a new portico, and he'd redecorated it, put lots more decoration and ornamentation into the temple.

It still wasn't quite finished, although I heard the Great had been dead for 25, 30 years at this point, and it wasn't even finished until 63 AD. Then it only lasted seven years before the Romans raised it to the ground.

[52 : 17] The Jews say to him, they're clearly not understanding what he's saying. How can you build this in three days? It's taken us 46 years to get this far.

But then we get a little aside, which is common in John's Gospel, but he was speaking of the temple of his body. See, John's wanting his readers to understand what the initial audience didn't necessarily understand.

Jesus is not talking about rebuilding bricks and mortar. It's, of course, talking about his body. Not the church, but his own physical body. It's talking about resurrection, not the coming of the church, as some people sometimes interpret this.

Now, there's a lot of ambiguity here. What does Jesus mean when he says, destroy this temple? At one level, he's saying to them, okay, you destroy the bricks and mortar, my body will rise in three days.

But the second level is that he's actually, at both points, talking about his body. Destroy this temple, my body, physically. I'll raise it in three days.

[53 : 20] Because the real temple, where God meets people, is the body of Jesus. The Word incarnate. John chapter 1's made that clear.

In chapter 1, verse 14, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And at the very end, when he spoke to Nathanael, Jesus says, you will see greater things than these angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

The point of meeting between earth and heaven is not the temple in Jerusalem. It's my body. So when he says, destroy this temple, he's saying, you destroy me, and I'll rise in three days.

And ironically, of course, that's what they did. They destroyed him. They killed him. And he rose. In three days, or on the third day.

Now these words about Jesus, oh, and let me add just one thing there, that ironically, when they destroyed Jesus, they actually destroyed the validity of the Jerusalem temple as well.

[54 : 24] Because Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We were told that in chapter 1. So there's no more need for any more sacrifices at all when Jesus dies.

So in destroying Jesus, they actually destroyed the temple itself. It had no more validity after his death. They didn't understand that. It's quite ironic in a way.

But they actually destroyed both temples at once, in a sense. The Romans just took the shell away. There were sacrifices offered, but they'd lost their validity once the crucifixion had happened.

Now an important theological point is being made here. And at this point, I'm going to finish. We're not going to look at the last couple of verses of the chapter. At the beginning of the Bible, God and his people are together without hindrance.

Doesn't last for long. They're kicked out of Eden in chapter 3. But then we get symbolic ways in which God comes to his people through a vision or dream occasionally to, say, Jacob.

[55 : 34] Through fire in a bush to Moses. A pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness to the Israelites, led by Moses. And then, a little bit more regularly, a tent in which was the Ark of the Covenant.

Built, we're told, in the book of Exodus, in the wilderness, portable means of God being present with his people. Later on, that came to be solidified in the building of the temple by David's son Solomon.

The Ark, or at least the Ark of the Covenant and the bits and pieces that were in the tent were then put into the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem. That was God's permanent dwelling with his people, where God and people met.

And yet, it was still symbolic. It was still a sign of his presence, but also a mark of inaccessibility because there was curtains and only a high priest could go in and there was a very hierarchical way of approaching.

That temple was destroyed in 587 by the Babylonians, rebuilt 70 years later or thereabouts in the Persian regime by Zerubbabel. And then that's the temple that stood through to Herod the Great's time and in Jesus' time and eventually destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD and to this day, no more Jewish temple.

[56 : 54] Jesus is saying here the point of meeting between God and people is no more a place. It is a person. He is the temple.

His risen body is the temple. That metaphor or reality is extended later in the New Testament to include the church as the temple of God, indwelt by God's Holy Spirit.

But we should never forget that we meet God through Jesus and in particular through his death and resurrection because that's where John's Gospel is pointing us to with his idea of temple and the hour has come and so on.

So it's not just Jesus meek and mild or in the manger or Jesus the great teacher or Jesus the healer or Jesus the man who just wandered the streets of Palestine and Galilee. It is Jesus on the cross and risen is the meeting point for us and God.

No more is there a holy place after Jesus died. Holy people through the holiest of people Jesus himself. Sadly Christians over the years have forgotten that and they've tried to rebuild holy places to construct church buildings as if they were Old Testament temples with curtains or screens or prohibited areas and so on.

[58 : 13] Or people have tried to hang back from access to God by putting other people as mediators between them like Old Testament priests. But no, the New Testament is thoroughly consistent on this and very radical.

We meet God fully without any other mediation but only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' words here though enigmatic and he knew that the Jews wouldn't understand and the disciples wouldn't understand are absolutely profound.

they really are life changing. He is saying here that all the system of the Old Testament is coming to an end at the point of my death and resurrection and I am the one he's saying who subsumes all of that into himself.

Now the meeting point of God is through my death and resurrection. Not through any sacrifices or any other rituals or ritual purification as in the water jars at Cana. No more are they needed now.

Jesus, him alone, his death and resurrection is the means by which you and I have total access to God. As the writer to the Hebrews says we can draw near with confidence to the throne of grace through Jesus, his death and resurrection.

[59 : 34] Well in this chapter we've seen Jesus as the winemaker and the whip maker. The one full of joy and celebration and enticing us to that kingdom to come but on the other hand the same Jesus full of righteous anger and judging and condemning wrong worship.

We see a contrast in some ways I think between Galilee and Judea one that's made often in the Gospels between the reception that he gets up north and the reception that he doesn't get down south.

we see a contrast between an insignificant place, Cana and the world's most important city then, Jerusalem. For us our application as I've hinted at throughout we ought to be very clear where real purification is found not in any sort of ritual but in Jesus' death and resurrection.

We should make sure that our lives are characterised by joy and not gloominess. We should make sure that our lives are full of proper worship that is worship that is through Jesus' death and resurrection.

We should make sure that the Jesus in whom we believe is the one who's described here in every aspect and facet. Not being selective and picking up the nice and comfortable bits staying in Cana but refusing to go to Jerusalem.

[61 : 04] The Jesus who is the one who brings in the great kingdom but also the one who comes to judge. As one commentator says the two episodes that we've looked at in this chapter actually typify what will happen when Jesus returns.

He will come to judge wrong worship in particular and he'll come to bring the marriage feast of the Lamb and both of them have four tastes in this chapter.

Well let me pray and then we'll sing and then we'll have a time where a couple of you may like to pray as well before we finish. So let's pray. God we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ for what we've learned of him in this chapter the various threads and currents and ideas and themes that are recorded here for us.

We thank you for John the Gospel writer's faithfulness and his evangelistic zeal so that his readers will believe in this same Jesus.

Help us to know now the joy of that messianic kingdom and enjoy the four tastes of heaven. But also we thank you for the challenge we stand under the rebuke where our worship is impure corrupt or false.

[62 : 26] We thank you for the reminder again that we have access to you through no one else but Jesus and through nothing else than his death and resurrection.

Amen. Amen.