

Miracles (5) The Changing of Water into Wine

In the eyes of many people, the least necessary of the Lord's miracles was the first one He performed, the changing of water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Record of the miracle is in John's Gospel, chapter 2. At the time the Lord had not begun His public ministry, though He was about to do so. Some of the disciples had been called, but by no means all of them. And an ancient tradition has it that it was at the marriage of one of those disciples, Nathaniel, that the miracle took place.

It is said 'On the third day' a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.' There are indications that Mary was helping with the arrangements for she seems to have been one of the first to know that the wine had run out, and she spoke to Jesus about it. His reply, inadequately translated into English in all of our translations, was not the rebuke it sounds to have been. 'Woman, why do you involve me?' Jesus replied. 'My hour has not yet come.' She continued to anticipate that He would certainly do something and told the servants to remain on hand.

His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water', so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet. They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, 'Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.'

I raised at the outset the point of necessity, this seems to be one of the least necessary of the Lord's miracles. People tend to talk and think about it in this way. However it is not in terms of necessity that we are to evaluate the miracles. The Lord did not perform miracles solely out of necessity. He performed them principally, as a means of strengthening the faith of those who wanted to believe in Him and in order to picture what He is willing to do at the spiritual level, in the lives of people forever afterwards. These are the real reasons which lay behind the miracle at Cana in Galilee.

Necessity hardly enters into it. By this time we must remember, the first five of the twelve disciples had gathered around the Lord and were ready to believe in Him as the Messiah. And the miracle was an early confirmation of what they were thinking. It was the means of strengthening their tentative convictions and it succeeded, for it is said that as a result of the miracle 'His disciples believed on Him'. And there is another point as well. As with all of the miracle stories, pictured here is something which the Lord can do for everyone of us. It shows us how the Lord changes the nature and character of the truth we know and which is with us as we determine to live according to the truth.

Water is a symbol in the Scriptures of Divine Truth. Though it sounds a slightly more technical way of saying it, water corresponds to truth, and is what we are to understand by it. 'No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.' John 3:5. Divine truth is what is meant. And then also, in Isaiah, Chapter 44:3 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.' Here again, it is Divine Truth that is meant. So many texts can be called upon to illustrate the point.

Divine Truth with every person at first is something that is cold and factual. It is as water stored in water pots of stone, good for certain limited purposes and for surface cleansing only. It is not the exhilarating and significant thing it can become and which it does become when it is genuinely loved and lived by. Take the Golden Rule for example. 'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets' Matthew 7:12. Most people know of this, but what a beautiful and thrilling thing it becomes when we live according to it. From merely being water, something cold and only known, it is changed into wine. And so it is with any truth or teaching of the Lord. It is all the difference between what Swedenborg spoke of as 'natural truth' and 'spiritual truth'. 'Natural truth', he wrote is truth in the memory and not in the life.' [Apocalypse Explained 176](#). 'When men are affected by (this truth), and live according to it, then it becomes spiritual truth.' [Arcana Caelestia 5951](#) What is originally only known becomes something which is really understood. Memory knowledge becomes living truth within us. Water is changed into wine.

The details of the story when rightly understood, reinforce the teaching which is involved here. We notice first of all, that the miracle took place at a marriage. It was at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. A marriage in the Word signifies the union of truth with good, of what we know of truth with the actual living of it. And it is within the

context of such a union and where it exists, that natural truth can become spiritual truth and in no other circumstances. This is why the Lord performed the miracle at a marriage and nowhere else, to teach us this. As we've seen, instead of being cold and factual, truth can become in us something which both gladdens and uplifts us. But it can only do so where a person is living his religion, where there is a real connection, a joining together, a marriage, of what they know with how they live.

The second thing we notice is that it was in the pouring out of it that the water was changed into wine. It is a small point but look at what it teaches us. As we draw out truths from our memories and try to apply them to our daily lives it is then that their nature and character changes. The transformation takes place in the actual drawing forth of them. It is the application of what we know which is the all important thing. And so it is with all the gifts and blessings of heaven which come to us in the measure that we seek to use them and give them out to others. To do nothing means that nothing happens. But where an effort is made to give out to others and to live according to the truth we know, then the way is open for our lives to be infilled with the blessings of heaven.

This miracle at Cana in Galilee, the changing of water into wine, was the first thing which as a grown man and in public the Lord is known to have done. It was not only the beginning of miracles, it was the beginning of all things of His public ministry. And it speaks to us of the early impact of the Lord when He has been received in our lives and is at work in them transforming truth from something which is dull and lifeless into something which is living and full of joy. This is something that can happen. Of course the Commandments seem dull and lifeless at the beginning, and many people complain of them in terms such as these. But in the wake of every genuine endeavour to live according to them, their beauty and the love of the Lord which lies behind them, begins to dawn on us.

In examining some of the miracle stories I have endeavoured to show the deeper truth and teaching which lies within them. Such deeper truth and teaching however is not confined to them alone. It is present throughout the inspired Scriptures. 'In each and all things of the Word there is an internal sense.' *Arcana Caelestia* 3464. There is so very much more involved than what simply appears on the surface. 'The Word is like a mine' wrote Swedenborg, deep down within which are precious gems without number waiting to be taken out. Much of it can at first seem to be irrelevant, but this is not so when we examine what lies within.

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