

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 21

“^{JOHN 2:5} *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.* ⁶ *And there were set there six water pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.* ⁷ *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.* ⁸ *And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.*” John 2:5)

TURNING WATER INTO WINE, #1

INTRODUCTION

The ministry of Jesus will now begin. He will be made known in what He does, as well as what He says. Summarizing the Gospel he recorded, Luke referred the “*treatise*” he had made “*of all Jesus began both to do and teach*” (Acts 1:1). In the place of “*treatise*,” other versions read, “*account*,” ^{NKJV} “*book*,” ^{NIV} “*scroll*,” ^{CEB} “*narrative*,” ^{CSB} “*discourse*,” ^{DARBY} “*work*,” ^{NJB} “*letter*,” ^{LIVING} “*volume*,” ^{WILLIAMS} “*matter*,” ^{ABP} “*wrote*,” ^{CEV} and “*report*.” ^{LITV} The word translated “*treatise*” [logon] has a root meaning of “*A COLLECTING, OR COLLECTION*” ^{THAYER} “*A WORD WITH RATIONAL CONTENT, REPORT, TEACHING*,” ^{FRIBERG} “*MESSAGE*,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} and “*DECLARATION*.” ^{GINGRICH} This is an orderly, focused, revealed account of who Jesus was, and what He did and said – the Gospel. This is more than mere literature, for the Gospel “*is the power of God unto salvation*” (Rom 1:16). This is the “*record God gave of His Son*,” which, when believed produces spiritual life, giving a witness within (1 John 5:10). There is no other message that possesses such power. This is the Word with which the Holy Spirit works. It is the word that causes the grace of God to work within the individual – “*the word of His grace*” (Acts 14:3; 20:32), or “*the Gospel of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24). We must break loose from any tendency to approach the record of the works and word of Jesus only with our intellect. This is the message God has ordained as the vehicle through which grace, power, and faith come to us. In “*the Kingdom of Christ and of God*” (Eph 5:5), as in the creation, things are wrought by the Word of God. We will find that the very record we are now reviewing will bring strength to the soul, enlightenment to the eyes of our understanding, and comfort and hope as well. This is an account of when Jesus first displayed His unparalleled power and authority. He rose above human aptitude and all natural resources and did something that was absolutely impossible – and this is only the beginning!

WHATEVER HE SAYS, DO IT!

“^{JOHN 2:5} *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.*”

We do not have any record of the life of Jesus at home – not so much as a syllable. After coming of age, we know what He was like in the Temple. But that is the totality of our exposure to His conscious life for the first thirty years of His life. However, we know from this record that Mary had learned some things about Him that were not apparent to

others. His light had been shining, so to speak.

THE ALERTNESS OF MARY. First, note the alertness of Mary. Our text says *“they wanted wine,”* or *“the wine was gone.”*^{NIV} Ordinarily one would think this would be of no consequence to Mary. Notwithstanding, she made an immediate association with Jesus, her Son, and immediately told Him, *“They have no wine.”* When seemingly rebuffed by Jesus, she did not let the matter drop. She seemed to sense that Jesus was going to do something about the situation. And how was this so? She had learned some things from being around Jesus – something about His character, as well as association with God. Armed with the same information Mary had – that there was no more wine – and having been mildly rebuked by Jesus, someone else might have panicked, or even dismissed the whole matter as inconsequential. But not Mary. She knew something about Jesus the others did not know.

WHATSOEVER HE SAITH UNTO YOU, DO IT! Other versions read, *“Do whatever He tells you,”*^{NIV} and *“Mind you do whatever he tells you.”*^{PHILLIPS} Behold what confidence she has in Jesus. She is not only persuaded He will do something, but that He will employ others, they must do what He says, and it will be the right thing to do. This kind of persuasion can only be birthed by being with the Lord Jesus, beholding His manner, and, to some degree, being acquainted with His ways.

Perhaps it is well to say at this point that many people do not know what to do simply because they have not spent enough time with the Lord Jesus. They cannot give good advice because their well is too shallow, and their experience with Jesus too brief. They walk at too great of a distance from Christ, and are too absorbed with this present evil world. They do not know how to address trouble.

Notice the scope of her advice: *“WHATEVER He saith unto you.”* She did not pretend to know what Jesus would say, but knew that it would precisely correct and thorough. That *“whatever”* factor is too often overlooked by professing believers. This word – *“whatever,”* or *“whatsoever”* requires discernment and right judgment. Think of how it is used in Scripture.

- “FOR **WHATSOEVER** THINGS WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, THAT WE THROUGH PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE.” (ROM 15:4)
 - “WHATSOEVER IS NOT OF FAITH IS SIN” (ROM 14:23).
 - “WHETHER THEREFORE YE EAT, OR DRINK, OR **WHATSOEVER** YE DO, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD” (1 COR 10:31).
 - “BE NOT DECEIVED; GOD IS NOT MOCKED: FOR **WHATSOEVER** A MAN SOWETH, THAT SHALL HE ALSO REAP” (GAL 6:7).
 - “FINALLY, BRETHREN, **WHATSOEVER** THINGS ARE TRUE, **WHATSOEVER** THINGS ARE HONEST, **WHATSOEVER** THINGS ARE JUST, **WHATSOEVER** THINGS ARE PURE, **WHATSOEVER** THINGS ARE LOVELY, **WHATSOEVER** THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT; IF THERE BE ANY VIRTUE, AND IF THERE BE ANY PRAISE, THINK ON THESE THINGS” (PHIL 4:8).
 - “NOT THAT I SPEAK IN RESPECT OF WANT: FOR I HAVE LEARNED, IN **WHATSOEVER** STATE I AM, THEREWITH TO BE CONTENT” (PHIL 4:11).
 - “AND **WHATSOEVER** YE DO IN WORD OR DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD AND THE FATHER BY HIM” (COL 3:17).
- “AND **WHATSOEVER** YE DO, DO IT HEARTILY, AS TO THE LORD, AND NOT UNTO MEN” (COL 3:23).

There is a tendency in the flesh to compartmentalize life. This allows men to attach convenient priorities that allow for freedoms they insist on having. But when it comes to responding to the Lord, *“whatever”* He says must be done. Men are not given a right to rank Divine requirements, even though some insist on doing so. The error of this kind of thinking was made known in the first and preeminent commandment under the Law: *“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with **all thy heart**, and with **all thy soul**, and with **all thy mind**, and with **all thy strength**: this is the first commandment”* (Mark 12:30). That is a rational breakdown of, *“What He saith unto you, do it.”*

DO IT! Not, "Try to do it," but **"Do it!"** Carry out what the Lord says, whether it is "Take up your bed and walk" (Mk 2:9), "Cast your net on the right side of the ship" (John 21:6), "Be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27) or "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). This is "the obedience of faith" (Rom 16:26), and it is an absolute requirement. **If we cannot do what the Lord says, we cannot have what the Lord gives!** But know this, the Lord will never ask you to do something He will not enable you to do, or that is not necessary to be done. Just **"Do it!"**

THERE WERE SIX WATER POTS

⁶ ***"And there were set there six water pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece."***

When One is omnipotent, as Jesus was and is, He can work with whatever is available. This is because He is "over all," and there is no any thing or any one who will not yield to Him. If men cite those who refuse to submit to Christ, it must be remembered than He can, with a word, simply remove them. The fact that they are stubborn does not obviate the fact that they are subject to Him. The same is true of both circumstances and things – "things" being bread (Mk 6:41-43), fish (Mk 8:7-8; John 21:6), winds (Mk 4:39; Lk 8:25), turbulent waves (Matt 8:26), and an unbroken colt (Lk 19:30,35), etc. In order to gain the advantage of the Lord's presence, no additional helps need to be brought in. He can use Moses' rod (Ex 4:2-5), David's sling (1 Sam 17:50), and the jawbone of an ass (Judges 15:15). He can use salt to heal waters (2 Kgs 2:20), a lump of figs to heal a death-threatening boil (2 Kgs 20:7), and a little pot of oil to pay a large debt (2 Kgs 4:2). The Lord will often use what is available, causing it to transcend its ordinary use, and be more productive than is naturally possible.

THERE WERE SIX WATER POTS OF STONE. Other versions read, *"six stone water jars."*^{NIV}

No one ever thought these ordinary containers would be used in a miraculous manner. They were not made of precious metal, or precious stones. They were ordinary vessels for ordinary Jewish uses. However, when the Lord comes into the picture, ordinary becomes extraordinary, whether we are referring to persons or things. When Jesus is in the picture omnipotence is present, and it is good that we learn to think of His presence as making all things possible.

AFTER THE MANNER OF THE PURIFYING OF THE JEWS. Other versions read, *"the Jewish custom of purification,"*^{NASB} *"the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing,"*^{NIV} *"for the purpose of washing, as is the way of the Jews,"*^{BBE} *"the Jewish cleansing ritual,"*^{CEB} *"for the Jewish rites of purification,"*^{ESV} *"the ablutions that are customary among the Jews,"*^{NJB} *"used for Jewish ceremonial purposes,"*^{LIVING} *"Jewish people used them to make things pure,"*^{IE} *"in accordance with the Jewish regulations for purification,"*^{WEYMOUTH} *"the cleansing of the Jews,"*^{ABP} and *"for washing themselves in the way that their religion said they must."*^{CEV}

This does **not** refer to the "washings" that were required under the Law (Heb 9:10; Ex 29:4; Lev 14:8; 22:6; Deut 21:6). John is careful to state this was "according to the purifying of the Jews," not according to the Law of God. We learn from Scripture that these washings were according to Jewish tradition. On one occasion certain scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus asking, "Why do Thy disciples transgress **the tradition of the elders?** for they wash not their hands when they eat bread" (Matt 15:2). Jesus, refusing to give dignity to the tradition, replied, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God

by *your tradition?*" (Matt 15:3). Mark, in his record of this occasion, provides further information on these traditions: *"For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables"* (Mark 7:3-4). Here we see how this tradition had pervaded the religion of the Jews, becoming a standard manner for them. Now, Jesus will use these vessels for other purposes, and in doing so, He will not be transgressing any section of the Law that was given by Moses.

CONTAINING TWO OF THREE FIRKINS APIECE. A *"firkin"* is a liquid measure of 8-7/8th gallons. "Two or three firkins" is estimated to have been between 20-30 gallons for each jar. Six such jars would hold from 120 to 180 gallons, or 24-35 five gallon cans. Likening it to an automobile gas tank of twenty gallons, this would be six-to-nine full tanks – a lot of liquid.

Notice how this does not appear to have any apparent relevance for the situation. The people are out of wine, and we have six available water pots with 120-180 gallon capacity. Take Jesus out of the picture, and this magnifies the dilemma.

I have observed over the years that there is a marked tendency for professed Christians to reason without the consideration of Jesus, and what He can do. Rarely do they look at what is in their hand, as God required Moses to do (Ex 4:2). For an unbeliever, "resources" are defined in a different way. Invariably those who do not live by faith think of "resources" as something that has been proved to be effective for the present need – something that has been put to the test, and proved adequate for the task. Of course, that is generally something that is being marketed.

But what will such people think of the scenario John has presented? A lot of people are present. It is a wedding feast, when you do not want things to be inadequate. Wine has run out, and none is readily available. As the facility is scanned, six stone water pots are seen – and they do not contain wine. It looks like there is no solution. But wait! **Jesus Christ is there, and that changes everything!** It is no different for us. When Jesus is confirmed to be present, "possibility" is redefined.

FILL THE WATER POTS, AND DRAW OUT NOW

"⁷ Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it."

JESUS SAITH UNTO THEM. Other versions read, *"Jesus saith to the servants,"* ^{NIV} *"the servers,"* ^{GWN} and *"the attendants."* ^{WEYMOUTH} A significant number of versions read that Jesus addressed *"the servants."* Although that is not what this text states, it is assumed it was the servants because of what is said later: *"the servants that drew the water knew"* (John 2:9). The word "servants" [diakonos] is used here. Some have supposed that the disciples were those servants, but this cannot be so. They were *"called,"* or invited guests, as was Jesus Himself (John 2:2).

FILL THE WATER POTS WITH WATER. This suggests these pots were empty. If they were not, they must have emptied them. Notice with what authority Jesus speaks to the servants. He is not the *"governor of the feast,"* or the bridegroom, yet He speaks with authority. None of the servants inquired who He was, or hesitated to do what Jesus had said. This suggests to me that when Jesus spoke, there was a note of authority in His voice. This is confirmed when a later report of Him teaching was given: *"And [He] came*

down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for **His word was with power**" (Luke 4:31-32). Other versions read, "His word was with authority,"^{NKJV} "His message had authority,"^{NIV} and "His word was with authority and ability and weight and power."^{AMPLIFIED} Later the people said, "What a word is this! for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out" (Luke 4:36). Matthew wrote, "For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt 7:29). The response of the servants confirms they sensed the truth of this. They immediately did precisely what He told them to do.

Perhaps it ought to be noted that when the words of Jesus are heard with the ears that are given to hear, men immediately associate His words with power and authority. If they do not push that perception from them, they will do whatever He says to do. I can testify that when I truly saw who Jesus was, I took His words seriously, and sought to fulfill them. I believe this is a common experience for those to whom faith has come. Such cannot ignore or forget what the Lord Jesus has said. What is more, Jesus delivers promises to those who so regard His Word: "He that hath **My commandments**, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). And again, "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will **keep My words**: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23).

THEY FILLED THEM TO THE BRIM. Other versions read, "full to the top,"^{BBE} and "to the very top."^{NET} Jesus told them, "FILL the water pots with water." Lexically, the word "fill" means "TO FILL ENTIRELY."^{STRONG'S} The servants knew this is what He meant, and therefore filled them up to the brim.

And what of words regarding **filling** that have been addressed to us. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom 15:13). "Ye might be **filled with all the fulness of God**" (Eph 3:19); "Be **filled with the Spirit**" (Eph 5:18); "that ye might be **filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding**" (Col 1:9). How ought we to measure these fillings?

DRAW OUT NOW. Jesus tells the servants to draw out NOW (that the vessels are filled), and take to the governor of the feast. Other versions read, "the master,"^{NKJV} "the headwaiter,"^{NASB} and "the chief steward."^{NRSV} The text states, "and they bare it," or "took it to him." With Jesus, there comes a time when what He gives must be distributed. When He fed the multitude, it was after He blessed and broke the bread and the fish that He gave to the disciples for distribution (Matt 14:19). In this case, the distribution was made after the vessels were "filled to the brim." They could not make the distribution as they were filling the vessels. Nor, indeed, could they take a sample directly to the governor without first filling the vessels.

There is something of value to be seen here. It seems to that what is distributed to the saints of God should come from a vessel that has been filled. I fear that in the Christian world there are many distributions that are made from partially filled vessels, and therefore much distortion and fragmented views are developed. There are also those who attempt to dredge things up from empty vessels, and therefore only give theological dust to the hearers that causes them to gasp and choke.

However, when we are filled with the new wine of the Spirit, and with spiritual understanding and wisdom, there is a certain wonderment that is without confusion that can be ministered. The light of such truth will shed illumination on the things the other

scribes have in his treasure (Matt 13:52) – scribes that are *“instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven.”* Such are like householders that bring out of their treasure things new and old, thus nourishing and rejoicing the household of God. Be among those who fill your vessel to the brim, and when it is full, draw out and distribute it. Then fill it up again!