

John Lesson # 3 Articles

A wedding is itself a celebration of a new beginning. John tells us that this one also took place on ‘the third day’, another reference to the resurrection story. The disciples have been promised an open heaven (v. 51). Now they are witnessing the marriage of heaven and earth in the actions of Jesus as he reluctantly provides them with a sign of who he is. Again we seem to hear Markan echoes in the text of John. In Mark, Jesus is so reluctant to disclose his identity that the term ‘Messianic Secret’ has been coined to describe his reticence. Jesus is less reticent in John, but his reluctance here is explained in terms of ‘his hour not yet having come’. This phrase is also used in Mark, when it refers to the passion of Jesus in which the true nature of God’s love will be displayed. For John this is described in terms of ‘glorification’. Jesus in this passage is not ready for that sort of identification, so he resists his mother’s attempt to push him forward too soon. There is a tension between disclosure and hiddenness which is developed throughout this Gospel. Jesus will often play a game of ‘hide and seek’ with those who are looking for him.¹

Israel was ignorant of its own Messiah. “There stands One among you whom you do not know,” said John the Baptist in 1:26. This wedding feast is a picture of the nation: the wine had run out, the people’s supply was emptied, yet their Messiah stood there to help them. The six waterpots were used for ceremonial cleansing (see Mark 7:3ff), but the Jewish ceremonies could not help the spiritually bankrupt nation. It was without joy (wine is a symbol of joy in the Bible—see Ps. 104:15 and Jud. 9:13) and without hope. The people had external ceremonies, but they had nothing to satisfy them within.

Christ will one day bring joy again to Israel, when it receives Him as its King. Israel will be wedded again to its God (see Isa. 54 and Hosea 2), and the wine of its joy will run freely and Christ’s glory will be revealed (John 2:11). Until that day comes, Christ must say to Israel, “What have I to do with thee?” (John 2:4) The nation has rejected Him, and it will not receive Him until that day when He returns in glory and power.²

The next statement, “Why do you involve me?” should be recognized by readers as a Semitism used to express various nuances of denial. It is here quite unlikely that Jesus was expressing hostility to his mother, but the statement does seem to imply that he wanted to set straight the parameters of his public relationship with his mother. Thus family relationships were not to be the determining factors in Jesus’ life. *Jesus was directed* not by his mother nor by his brothers but *by his relationship to the Father, in whose bosom the Son existed*. He came to fulfill the Father’s purpose for him; namely, he came to make the Father known (1:18). To act on the Father’s authority and to do his will was the work of the Son (5:19–20, 30, 36), and to glorify the Father was the reason for the glorification of the Son (12:28; 17:1). It is in the context of such an understanding of the Father and Son relationship that the evangelist introduced his theme of the hour (2:4). In the Gospel of John the entire life of Jesus was directed toward obeying the Father and fulfilling the hour. In this Gospel the ultimate focus of “the hour” is on the glorification of Jesus—his death and resurrection. What may seem to be harsh words, therefore, must be understood in the full context of Jesus’ destiny and his obedience to the Father.

The point of the story here is that the person in charge is no longer Jesus’ mother. Indeed, readers should notice that his mother completely fades out of the story from this point on. She has served the evangelist’s purpose of moving the focus to Jesus. The point of the story is not to focus on the mother.

R. Brown, a Roman Catholic, is quite correct in his critique of writers on Mariology who have argued that Mary’s so-called persistence resulted in Jesus’ subsequent action.¹² In this Gospel Jesus is consistently pictured as responding not to human pressure but to the direction of God. Such a statement is not a matter of a Roman Catholic-Protestant debate; it is a matter of what the text means. The focus of this story is not on Mary but on Jesus.³

¹ McFadyen, P. (1998). *Open Door on John: a gospel for our time* (p. 11). London: Triangle.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (pp. 214–215). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹² See R. Brown, *John*, 1.102–3.

³ Borchert, G. L. (1996). *John 1–11* (Vol. 25A, pp. 155–156). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.