



# *The Wedding Feast of Cana of Galilee*

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**T**he Lord Jesus Christ begins His ministry at a Wedding Feast in Cana of Galilee (John 2: 1-12). During this time, Galilee was largely Gentile country. Attending a Wedding Feast in Galilee was symbolic in that the Kingdom of God would be spread beyond Judea to the entire world. It would be the first of seven signs performed by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Gospel of St John.

**The wedding is held the third day from the call of His first holy disciples who were originally followers of St John the Baptist (St Andrew, St John, St Simon, St Peter, St Philip, and St Bartholomew). The Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples were invited to this Wedding Feast. The mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, St Mary was also in attendance. Church tradition attributes the groom of the wedding to be St Simon the Zealot.**

**Before the wedding celebration had ended, the host ran out of wine. St Mary said to the Lord Jesus, "They have no wine." This is an example of St Mary's gift of intercession on the behalf of others. Further with**



*"The First Miracle of Our Lord."*

her statement, not question, St Mary expects that the Lord will act upon her statement.

**The Lord Jesus Christ** replies, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." (John 2:4). In His reply the Lord does not say "no" nor embarrass His mother, but simply reminds her that His time of public disclosure is not this day. "My hour" refers to the Lord Jesus Christ's Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

**St Mary asks the** servants to do as the Lord instructs, "Whatever He says to you, do it." (John 2:5) Many interpret this as St Mary calling upon all humanity to obey the Lord.

**The Lord said to the** servants "Fill the water pots with water" (John 2:7) and the servants did so. Following this the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master

of the feast." (John 2:8) When the master of the feast tasted the water it had become wine. There was no specific action on the part of the Lord to make the water become wine. His Holy Word alone was more than enough.



**The early Church Fathers believed this** transformation of water into wine symbolized the later change of the bread and wine into the Lord Jesus Christ's Body and Blood at the Holy Eucharist. Further it is thought that the water symbolized the old dispensation that is changed into wine symbolizing the new dispensation revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ. In ancient days the Jews, heavily diluted wine with water, one part wine to three parts water, to discourage drunkenness.

**“This was the beginning of signs, Jesus did in Cana** of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.” (John 2:11) Thus this first sign was more meaningful than what was immediately apparent. It allowed the disciples to see the Lord's glory, revealing that He did indeed come from the Father. This miracle also reinforced a deeper and stronger faith within the disciples who had been recently called out.

**By the Holy presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at** the Wedding of Cana of Galilee, the Coptic Orthodox Church considers marriage to be holy and honorable. The beginning of the Lord Jesus Christ's signs was also at this wedding. Truly the Lord Himself sanctified marriage.

**Both the Old Testament and New Testament** viewed marriage as an image of the relationship between God and His chosen people. In the New Testament, the Kingdom of God is compared to a marriage feast and it is possible that the white robes of the saints reflect the practice of wearing the color “white” at wedding ceremonies (Revelation 19:8).

**The Coptic Orthodox Matrimonial Rite is** divided into: Betrothal and the Crowning Ceremony. The betrothal is not a sacrament but rather precedes the sacrament of marriage. The betrothal is a

necessary period in which couples that are seriously contemplating marriage become better acquainted with one another. They discuss feelings and thoughts and prepare themselves for marriage while growing together in Christian love. It is at this time that their families also become better acquainted and discuss the details of the marriage and its preparation. A certificate of betrothal is signed to signify the sincerity of the relationship.

**The time of the original Rite for the Crowning** Ceremony was the Sunday morning following the morning raising of the incense immediately before the Divine Liturgy, similar to the Rite of Ordination of a monk in the monastery. As a monk would relate to the Lord in his spiritual life by practicing the Rite of Monasticism so also should the bride and groom come together in the Lord through holy Matrimony. Both should be ready to receive the Holy Eucharist and attend the Divine Liturgy as the first thing they participate together in, following the Sacrament of Marriage.

**To start their life off with the Lord Jesus Christ,** the Church recommends that the couple spend the first three days in prayers and spiritual readings, overcoming the bodily lusts enabling their spiritual love together to unite with God first. A holy beginning to any marriage builds a strong foundation for the years to come. “...the rain descended, the floods came and the winds (tribulations and troubles) blew, and beat on that house, and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24-25)

**When Tobit the righteous married St Sarah, he said** to her, “rise up my sister, let us pray to God today, tomorrow, and after tomorrow. And in those three days let us join God. After the third night we consummate our marriage, as we are children of saints and cannot marry like Gentiles who do not know God. So both rose up, prayed fervently for God to bless them.” (Tobit 8:4-6)



**With the Rite of the Crowning Ceremony, the** marital house is established and becomes a small church sanctified by the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The couple believes in His Holy power and mysterious work in the Sacrament of Marriage and surrenders their lives together to the Lord. They pledge to obey Him and His commandments, which they heard reinforced in the Sacrament, and will allow the Holy Spirit to work in their lives together.

**Readings for the first days of marriage should** always include: the Holy Book of Genesis 2:18-24, the Holy Gospel of St Matthew chapter 19, the Holy Book of Ephesians chapter 5, and the Holy Book of St Peter chapter 3.

**Much has been said about equality among** genders in the Coptic Orthodox Church particularly as it relates to the marriage relationship. Authority and roles are often topics discussed for newly engaged couples as well as those who are married.

**As for equality, one can return to the Crowning** Ceremony itself and reflect upon the two crowns placed upon the bride and groom. What does this symbolize for our beloved Coptic Church? The Holy Book of Galatians 3:28 states, "...there is neither male nor female for you are all one in the Lord Jesus Christ." So when the crowns are placed upon the head of the bride and groom this symbolizes their citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus there is indeed equality for each gender in the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Taking marital equality further, there should also** be order within every living system and subsystem as it was in the beginning; this certainly includes each and every marriage. First husbands and wives are called to submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21). The husband is to serve God as head of his wife, as the

Lord Jesus Christ is head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23). The wife is subject to her husband as the Church is subject to the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:24). In the same respect, husbands should love and take care of their wives, in the same manner as he does the Lord Jesus Christ.

**In the Sacrament of Marriage there is a fullness** of equality between a husband and wife and a natural order. The husband can be paralleled to the icon of the Lord Jesus Christ and the wife the icon of the Church.

**May the Sacrament of Marriage be always holy,** blessed and everlasting in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Holy Bible Quiz Answers

1. Moses
2. Jonathan
3. Elijah
4. St John
5. Lord Jesus Christ
6. Silas
7. Koran, Dathan, Abiram
8. Mary and Mary Magdalene
9. Samuel
10. Uzziah