

The Age of the Messiah has Come

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[0 : 00] Good evening. Good evening? It's not evening. I'm getting very confused. Good afternoon. We'll get started, so if you'd like to take a seat.

I must apologise, I do have a cold. I'll try and remember to turn the microphone off if I have to blow my nose. I'm sure that none of you want to hear that too loudly. It's good to see you all.

Today we're going to carry on looking at the Gospel of John. We're going to spend some time in the first 12 verses of Chapter 2 this afternoon.

If you've got a Bible with you, then please turn to that passage with me now. And if you're using one of our church Bibles, then you can find that on page 887.

That's on page 887. Great.

[1 : 04] John Chapter 2, verses 1 to 12. On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. And when the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine. And Jesus said to her, Woman, what does this have to do with me?

My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you. Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding 20 or 30 gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, Fill the jars with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.

And so they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water, now become wine, and did not know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew, the master of the feast called the bridegroom, and said to him, Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine.

[2 : 20] But you have kept the good wine until now. This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory.

And his disciples believed in him. After this, he went down to Capernaum with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

Now this is a very famous story. There seems to be something about a large amount of water being turned into a large amount of wine, which seems to stick in everyone's mind.

But because we know this story so well, it's easy to get sidetracked by all sorts of little details in the story. For example, people spend a lot of time discussing whether there's any significance to the numbers of the jars, or discussing whether this is really wine, or any number of details from this passage.

Now these discussions may be interesting. They might even be helpful on certain occasions. But since we've got a very limited time together, we want to get to the nub of the story, to the core.

[3 : 31] And we get a nice big clue to that in verse 11. Look at that verse with me. It says this, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him.

In other words, Jesus did this, his first sign, to show his glory and so that his disciples would believe in him. When we read this story by ourselves or with our friends then, it is helpful to ask ourselves, how does this sign point to the glory of Jesus?

What does it tell us about him that shows us how glorious he is? And how does it lead people to believe? And what does belief look like in light of this sign?

Those are the sort of questions that we need to ask when we're confronted with this story. And we're going to ask these questions in two parts this afternoon. Firstly, we're going to see that the glorious messianic age has now come in Jesus.

But secondly, we're going to see that Jesus' people are still waiting. So firstly, here we see that the glorious messianic age has come.

[4 : 50] Let's quickly run through the simple facts of the miracle. I say simple, but what we have here is spectacular and there's no doubt about that. Jesus, his family, and his disciples are at a wedding.

The wedding party runs out of wine. Mary tries to get Jesus involved and he rebuffs her. Nevertheless, Jesus tells the servants to fill up six huge stone jars with water and take some of that water to the master of ceremonies.

And when they take it to the master of the ceremonies, it has become excellent wine. Now this is astonishing. We shouldn't miss how astonishing this is.

If nothing else, this shows us the incredible power of Jesus Christ in which of us could turn any water into any amount of wine in an instant. But we do have to ask ourselves, what's the point?

Is Jesus just being incredibly helpful? Is he like us? Does he just find awkward situations awkward? Is he trying to help out and avoid a difficult situation for the bridegroom?

[6 : 02] Well, no. There seems to be an awful lot more going on in these verses than that. And to try and draw that out, let me read you these verses from the Old Testament prophet Amos.

Amos says this. He says, Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, the Lord, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed.

The mountains shall drip sweet wine and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them.

They shall plant vineyards and drink their wine and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. these verses from the prophet Amos represent quite a large selection of different passages that all talk in a similar way.

And all of these passages talk about what will happen when God's king comes to usher in a new age. I'm sure you noticed as we read that passage from Amos that it talks a lot about wine.

[7 : 08] It says the mountains will drip sweet wine. All the hills will flow with sweet wine. and that the people will plant vineyards and drink the wine they get from the vineyards.

In so many places in the Old Testament the prophets describe what it's going to be like when God's king comes and one of the big pictures they use as with that passage in Amos is lots of wine.

Now obviously wine is being brought into focus in those passages because it symbolizes something bigger than wine something better than wine. Plenty of wine is what you have at banquets and at feasts and banquets and feasts are signs of abundance are signs of blessing and joy.

Feasts happen when there is an overflow of joy of peace and of celebration. Think about that you don't have feasts to become full we feast because we are full full of joy and full of celebration.

perhaps the power of this image is lost slightly on those of us who have so much so often and don't tend to banquet at all times. But these prophetic feasts the flowing wine the fruit of the vineyards all of these things are a sign of every trouble and every sorrow being swallowed up in blessing forever.

[8 : 35] And the prophets of the past said that this is what would come when the Messiah came. And so fast forward to this wedding party in Cana with the man who has been declared the son of God the Christ.

And now at this wedding he turns vats of water into wine and not just cheap wine excellent wine and not just a little bit of it but lots of it.

So how does this miracle show the glory of the Christ? Well it shows that now with this man Jesus the messianic age is here.

The age of God's blessing of fulfillment of promises has come because God's king has come. perhaps he's just claiming that perhaps he can't back that up but that's clearly not the case.

He doesn't stand up and say that here. He doesn't say look at my glory the age of Christ has come. No he makes a claim via a very powerful miracle. He doesn't just claim he backs up his claim by turning perhaps 120 gallons of water into wine in an instant.

[9 : 52] this is a backed up claim of significant proportions. The messianic age is here because the messiah is here.

So what are we to do when this sign faces us? Well everyone who is faced with this sign ought to do what this whole gospel drives us towards and it's what the disciples do in verse 11.

In verse 11 the disciples believe. This sign wins the trust of the disciples and it really ought to win our trust as well.

Jesus does a miracle here and with it he makes a grand claim. He says through me the age of fulfillment is here and through me all the promises of God are being fulfilled.

And what we should do when confronted with that sign is believe him. That is we should believe that the new perfect age of blessing and abundance of sorrow swallowed up in joy is going to come through no one other than this man this carpenter from Nazareth.

[11 : 05] love. Now it's unlikely that anyone you know is going to put it in these words but they are all looking for something a bit like this age of fulfillment this kingdom of God in a twisted way perhaps but they still long for something like it.

If you found the most stubborn atheist and asked what deep down they longed for they would say they long for everything to be good to be enjoyable to be peaceful who doesn't long for abundance and joy forever.

the difference is they believe that something else can bring it. The most ardent atheist just hopes the world will provide that for them. They hope that they'll somehow be able to scramble together enough of something before they die to make it all worthwhile.

But they long for something very similar. Most of the people you come across won't be as ardently atheist as that. Perhaps most of the people you bring the story of the gospel of John to will have something or other deep down that is their hope.

Perhaps their family or their charitable work. Most people in our country at this time really believe that they will enter into this age of blessing by finding their real selves and expressing that.

[12 : 27] There are as many permutations of this as there are people but the core of it all is this. Most people you could talk to about Jesus will want an age of abundance and blessing.

They will want peace and joy but they will not believe that Jesus is the one who will usher that in where they can find it. Most people don't believe that Jesus is the one who will put away every sorrow forever and make the mountains drip with sweet wine but they should because that is what Jesus claims to be here in this sign and Jesus' disciples see this glorious claim of Christ and they believe it.

It's also worth stopping to think briefly whether you also believe that that's who Jesus is and what he's going to do. It's just as easy for Christians to forget that Jesus is the only hope we have for this because we live in a world that claims to be able to do this all the time.

A little example. I hate to mention Christmas but the onslaught is coming. we're all going to see very soon advert after advert that gives us the picture of a perfectly abundant and peaceful life, a blessed life and it will say come to us and we can give it to you.

We'll make the mountains drip sweet wine and it's easy even just a little bit to believe these adverts. An example of the propaganda that surrounds us all the time.

[14 : 04] It's easy even for Christians to pin our hopes even a bit on the perfect kingdom of Coca-Cola. But no one else can and no one else will do everything that they promise.

They are not the ones who can bring this messianic age of blessing and promise. They are not the king that God has anointed. Christian Jesus is the one who has brought abundant blessing and an age of life and fulfillment and belief in Jesus Christ means believing that about him every day of our lives.

And here in John chapter 2 Jesus has come and the messianic age of fulfillment has come with him. Well that brings us on to the second part that we have to talk about and that is this.

Jesus' hour has not yet come. Even though the messianic age is here Jesus' hour has not yet come. And to see that let's look briefly at the exchange between Mary and Jesus at the start of this passage in verses 3 to 4.

It says this, When the wine ran out the mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine. And Jesus said to her, Woman, what does this have to do with me?

[15 : 25] My hour has not yet come. Mary asks Jesus to get involved with the wine situation and yet Jesus says that his hour has not yet come.

Now since some of us here will be going through this passage with friends, I just want to take a brief detour to something that bothers a lot of people about this passage. Just very briefly, to some, Jesus' tone here seems way off.

I just want to say a couple of things about that. You may be reading the Bible with someone who objects to that and hopefully you can have something of an answer for them. There is some suggestion that when Jesus addresses Mary as woman here, it comes across more rudely in our language than it would have been originally.

It is a rebuke, but it is a polite and courteous one. Secondly, it's important to see what Jesus might be saying to his mother.

What he seems to be doing here is saying to Mary, whether or not I get involved with this situation will be decided by my divine mandate rather than by the desires of my family.

[16 : 34] And that was perhaps a very difficult thing for Mary to hear, but it's important that she does because she also needs to learn to come to him as everyone does, not as a son, not as a family member, but as the Messiah that he is.

Don't get put off the substance of this exchange because of the apparent abruptness. We need to focus on the core of what Jesus says here. He says, my hour has not yet come.

So how on earth does that work? We've just spent a good amount of time talking about how the time has come, how the age of fulfillment is here now. So what's going on?

When Jesus talks about his hour in John's gospel, it's almost always referring to his death, to his resurrection, his ascension, and all that follows.

So although we do see the arrival of the messianic age here in John chapter 2, we need to see that this is not the full thing yet. Something still needs to happen.

[17 : 35] The hour of complete fulfillment has not arrived. Remember those words we read in Amos about the mountains dripping with sweet wine and all of God's people enjoying the fruits of their vineyards.

Well, we need to see that this is that. But it also clearly isn't that either. Here, a few wedding guests get good wine when it was close to running out.

Now, this is a sign of the great fulfillment, but it's clear that the hour has not yet come. All of God's people are not enjoying full blessing forever. Not yet. Now, in many ways, John's gospel pushes us towards the death of Jesus and all that follows as his hour, the hour of fulfillment.

That is the time when everything is achieved. And at that hour, much is achieved that hasn't yet been fulfilled at this wedding in Cana. But we're also introduced to a pattern here in Cana, or rather a tension that permeates the whole New Testament as well as our lives today.

The fact that the hour is here, the age of fulfillment has come, and yet that age of fulfillment is not quite fully here either.

[18 : 53] Now, we need to grasp that tension as we read this story of John with our friends and with our family, because the natural question we have when we hear of Jesus bringing the new age of blessing is, well, where is it?

If Jesus has brought an age of fulfillment, fulfillment, then why is my life and the life my friends experience so disappointingly difficult in the day to day?

And the answer to that question lies in this tension. The hour has come, but the hour is not yet here. We saw that the belief that this miracle points us to is the belief that Jesus is the one who will bring all blessing and fulfillment.

That's the faith that Jesus' followers are pushed towards as they see his miracles. But the faith we have needs to take into the reality of verse 4, the reality that the hour has come, but it has not yet come.

This miracle commits us to believe that Jesus Christ is the only one who brings all abundant blessing, but it also insists that we believe that whilst we face the disappointment of a world that still waits.

[20 : 12] We have much now. We are forgiven now. We really are. We have the church now. It is a true gift through the kindness of our Messiah. We have the spirit of God within us who even now unites us to Jesus Christ, comforting us and teaching us.

We have so much now. Blessing has come. But you can also think of hundreds of examples of things that are still very much broken, that are still so far from fulfillment.

And I'm sure as you read this with your unbelieving friends, they will be able to see many examples as well. They just seem to roll off the tongue. Injustice still happens far too frequently.

Which of us is not beset by weariness and struggle? And at the end of the day, death still happens far too frequently. Sometimes it happens slowly.

Sometimes it happens suddenly. And nothing seems to make that fact any better. The disciples watch this miracle and they see the water turn to wine and the great age of blessing proclaimed.

[21 : 20] And the disciples believe that. It's true. But as time goes on, they will see that they have to believe this same thing whilst they wait for the final hour to come at last.

They will have to believe this as suffering and trials pile up around them. That's the call that Jesus makes to them. Believe that Jesus brings the kingdom of blessing and keep on believing whilst you wait and things take surprising turns.

Keep on believing that. And this is the sign, this is the call that this sign makes to us as we read about it and makes to our friends as they read about it with us.

It says to us, Jesus really is the one who brings the kingdom of God's blessing. He really, really is. He is the one who will usher in the age of overflowing joy and abundance.

And in many senses, he already has. So believe in him, trust in him, hope in him. But it also calls us to hold fast this faith as we wait for Jesus's final hour to come.

[22 : 34] Despite the disappointments, despite the sorrows, despite the doubts that come whilst we wait. We wait for the hour when Jesus Christ returns, when we see him and when we will taste all of the abundance of his blessing forever and ever.

That is the hope of the Christian faith. But that hour is not yet here. And we must persevere through the difficult age whilst it lasts.

But it will not last forever. And one day, Jesus's final hour will be here. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have shown us your glory so clearly in these miracles that Jesus did.

We pray that you would help us to see what Jesus did and believe in him. And help us to present these things to our friends and family who don't yet believe in him.

Father, we pray that every day you would help us to persevere through a difficult age as we wait.

[23 : 54] Help us to hold fast to the hope we have that Jesus Christ alone is the one who will bring abundance and blessing and joy forever. In Jesus' name, Amen.