

Jesus spent 30 years preparing for a ministry that lasted just three short years. From the age of 12 to about 30, we don't even hear anything about His life with Mary and Joseph or His preparation for ministry. They were quiet years, hidden in obscurity from the whole world. Yet how important they must have been.

Did it ever strike you as unusual that the first miracle He performed was done while partying with friends at a wedding reception? I suppose that might sound irreverent, but what do you suppose a wedding reception was like in 30 A.D.? Probably a wonderfully happy celebration, don't you presume? Did He heal the groom's withered hand? After the wedding cake was accidentally knocked over, did He produce a gorgeous wedding cake out of nowhere, complete with a plastic bride and groom beaming atop scrumptious frosting? No. Well, what did He do? He made the best wine anyone had ever tasted! In fact, it was SO GOOD that the partygoers at the wedding thought the food service folks had done them wrong, serving cheap wine to get them started, and holding back the really good stuff until they were filled up with the cheap stock! Did you ever wonder about all this? What could we possibly glean from this miracle? Was this just done as fluff? Was He just trying to make a good impression? Here is a real paradox.

I think He was trying to tell us that His wine is better than men's wine. I believe He was trying to show us that what He has to offer is so superior to the best the world has to offer that it is incomparable. But what does His wine stand for? We might take a look at the Song of Solomon 1:2b. In this beautiful story which relates God's unending love for us and demonstrates the way He woos us out of our old selves, this book opens with the profound declaration of His Beloved:

“Let him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine.”

Brian Simmons in his study of the Song of Solomon suggests that wine symbolizes all the good things of the earth God has provided for man to enjoy. Psalm 104:14-15 reads

“He (God) causes the grass to grow for the cattle,  
and vegetation for the service of man,  
that he may bring forth food from the earth,  
and wine that makes glad the heart of man...”

So was Jesus saying in this miracle that He can make a better glass of wine than the vineyard owners? No, He was saying that He had a new wine to offer; the

wine of relationship between God and man, the wine of exchanging hearts, God to man and man to God. This is really new wine.

I'm spending a block of time right now studying the Song of Songs using Simmons' book titled **Song of Songs, the Journey of the Bride**. I encourage you to consider getting it and studying along with me.

We have all tasted the wine of the pleasures of this life. Many of them are good. Many are gifts God made to give us pleasure, like enjoying his beautiful creation, friendships, family and even church. But there is a better wine than any pleasure this earth affords – and that wine is the wine of a growing intimacy with Him. If you and I would dare to believe that He offers us more of Himself than we have yet experienced, if we could let our hopes rise to the point of making a fresh surrender to the Lord of Love, we just might find ourselves in new levels of intimacy with Him.

I am encouraged to realize anew that the Shulammite maiden is already in relationship to the King, already chosen by Him when the story begins. Yet the entire story is one of a journey of transition, a journey from young love to mature Bridal love. And we are told that this book, penned by God via the finger of King Solomon, is meant to tell us of His desire for relationship to us individually, as well as with His Bride, the collective group of believers we called The Church.

As I've watched married people, it is remarkable to observe how their relationships morph through the years. Some seem to just stay together without any observable affection for one another, but more out of convenience; some despair of any meaning, and either separate from each other or tolerate one another. But sometimes you see a couple who have really lived life together. They have done it all – seen hard times, seen blessings; been through trials and sickness; disappointed one another, and forgiven one another. These precious ones often end up nearly looking like one another. They come to a point of knowing one another so well that one can finish the other's thoughts. They have become one. They have made new wine.

Jesus, I believe, offers each of us new wine. New wine IN our relationship to Him. New times of just the two of us being together; new times of just wasting time with each other.

Have you drunk any new wine recently? Oh, here He is, offering me a glass. Listen, I'll talk to you later. We're going to slip into His chamber for a bit of personal time. Bye!

