

I would like to tell you about what happened recently at a wedding. I am unable to read and write and am not very good on dates, but I would say that it is about the year AD 27. I am a servant in a large house in the village of Cana. My Master is not short of a bob or two since he has quite a number of servants and also has a steward to help manage his affairs. One of the Master's sons had been engaged to a young lady in the village for about a year. Not sure if the lady was the choice of her future groom or if she was chosen by his father.



Preparations for the wedding had been going on for some time and an extension had been built onto the house in readiness for the young married couple. It was going to be quite an extravagant affair with many guests and a sumptuous supper. The week before the wedding the Master had sent us out to the surrounding villages to invite the guests to the wedding and to tell them that we would get back to them in a few days when everything was ready.

One job that we had to do was to fill some large stone water jars with water. The well was outside so we had to make quite a few journeys backwards and forwards to fill the jars. There were six jars altogether and I should say that each held about thirty gallons. Lots of water was needed because the guests would be expected to wash their hands and cups before meals, as was their normal custom.

Another task we had was to prepare the floral wedding canopy (Huppah) under which the couple would stand for the ceremony. This would symbolize the new home that the couple would create. There was an air of excitement as all of these preparations were taking place and I would say that it was probably one of the busiest times at work that I have ever known.

At last the great day arrived. I expect that the groom was getting a bit impatient as he waited for his father to tell him the day and the time of the wedding as he had to be ready at a minute's notice to fetch his bride. On that Tuesday, as he walked through the village to her house, guests joined him as he went along so there was quite a procession by the time they arrived at the bride's home, where she too had been waiting patiently for her groom, not knowing exactly when he was going to arrive and take her back to his home for the wedding.

There was loads of food ready for the guests and plenty of wine too. The celebrations were going to last for a week so it must have been quite difficult to know how much food and wine to have available. The steward had instructed us to bring out the best wine for the first few days. This meant that we could then provide the guests with the poorer quality of wine once they were feeling a bit more free and easy – and perhaps a bit tipsy – so would not notice the difference!

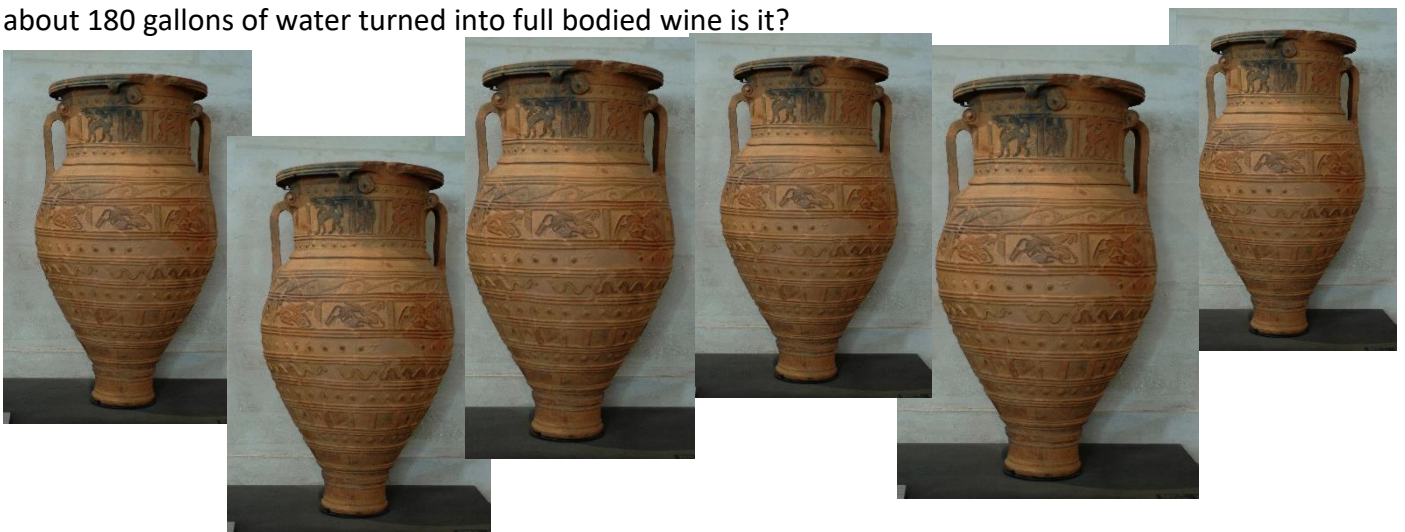
One of the guests was a man named Jesus, who was there with his mother. Apparently he was a joiner who had been looking after his mother and siblings after his father had died. He had recently packed in his job and started to travel around towns and villages as a preacher and had gathered a few weather-beaten fishermen as his followers, who were also at the wedding with him.

A few days into the celebrations there was a major calamity as it appeared that there was no more wine left. How terrible! This poor couple would have the shame of this hanging over them for the rest of their lives. No-one – but no-one – ever runs out of wine or food at a wedding. Hospitality for guests is a grave responsibility so the humiliation of running out of wine would be dreadful.

The accommodation for the female guests was quite near to where the wine was stored so Mary, the mother of Jesus, got to hear about the dilemma. I happened to be standing quite near to her when she told Jesus that they had no wine left. He did not really seem as if he wanted to get involved in the matter as he said something like, “Not my problem.” Mary however, seemed to think that he could do something about the situation and said to us, “Do whatever he tells you.” It was a bit of an odd thing to say to us and I could not think for the life of me how a joiner – or itinerant preacher – could do anything about the lack of wine. As I stood there and looked at Mary she was obviously quite convinced that he would be able to help. Logically it was rather a daft idea, and yet, there was something about her that I could not quite put my finger on and I felt compelled to listen to what she said.

What did Jesus tell us to do? Well this was even more laughable than what Mary had said. By now the water in the large stone jars had practically all been used and Jesus told us to re-fill the jars with water. Now I ask you, would you have seen that this instruction had anything at all to do with running out of wine? Were we to ignore what he told us to do? Should we go to the steward in charge and get his opinion? Should we just humour him and fill the jars anyway? As I looked at Jesus I felt something inside me that I could not understand. I sensed a power about this individual that I had never experienced before. I knew that regardless of my lack of understanding as to what was happening, I felt I had to do what this man said.

After we had filled up the water jars again, Jesus told us to ladle some water out and take it to the steward. As usual, the steward had a sip to see that it was okay and then absolutely astounded us by calling the bridegroom over and congratulating him because of the excellent quality of the wine. Well, what a turn-up for the book! We **KNEW** that it was water that we had put into those jars. It was quite obvious that this Jesus had had something to do with it. What strange powers had this man? Who was he? On my next day off I shall most certainly go and listen to what he has to say – after all, it is not every day that you see about 180 gallons of water turned into full bodied wine is it?



Reading: John 2: 1 – 11 Wedding at Cana