

Something Better



SABBATH—JANUARY 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 2:1-22.

MEMORY VERSE: “And Jesus answered them [the religious leaders] ‘Destroy this temple [Jesus’ body], and I [Jesus] will raise it [Jesus’ body] again in three days’ ” (John 2:19, NIV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: We often try to look for a better life. But only Jesus offers something better: better wine, a better temple, even a better birth!

IN JOHN 1:1-18, WE SAW THAT JESUS IS THE BEST EXAMPLE OF GOD. He was with God from the beginning (John 1:1, 2). Jesus created the universe, put life in the universe, and keeps the universe going (John 1:3-5). As a human, Jesus showed the glory of God (John 1:14). He came to us direct from heaven, where He was with God, face to face (John 1:18).

John 2:1-22 is a natural addition to the introduction of John’s book (John 1:18). If Jesus is the best, He is naturally better than all substitutes.¹ But it is sad to know that people have developed many substitutes for Jesus. They try to become rich or to buy many things. Other people try to find success in work. Still other people try to become “wise,” beautiful, or famous. When they fail, they try drugs, alcohol, or addictive games such as gambling. Some people try many different religions. But no matter what people choose to try, Jesus offers something better than what they could ever have without Him.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 17.

¹substitutes—things or people put in the place of other things or people. We often try to substitute Jesus with money, fancy houses, or people we love.

SUNDAY—JANUARY 11

LIVING PARABLES² (John 2:1-22).

At first there seems to be little spiritual food in John 2:1-22. There is a simple story about a wedding. In this story, the wine runs out before the end of the reception. Jesus rescues the wedding couple and their caterer³ from embarrassment. Then Jesus drives some animals and money changers out of the temple. The stories are well-known and offer no surprises. There are few beautiful verses that we can memorize. Are these stories too simple? Or is there something deep in these stories?

Also, an interesting thing about the book of John is that there are no parables.⁴ Parables were an important part of Jesus' teaching. So why does John leave parables out of his book? Under the leading of the Holy Spirit, John used real events⁵ as living parables. Jesus used each event to teach us something special about Himself. As the first miracle in the book of John, the wedding story is the first of these living parables.

Read through the story of the wedding feast (John 2:1-11). Why do you think this story is important?

²living parables—stories of things that really happened. We use these stories to teach a truth.

³caterer—someone who makes food for a party.

⁴parables—short fiction (did not really happen) stories that teach a truth. For example, read Luke 15:8-10. This story did not really happen. But Jesus told this story to teach us about the joy of salvation.

⁵events—things that happened.

How would you describe the relationship between Jesus and His mother? John 2:3-5.

Jesus was not being disrespectful to His mother, but He clearly did not agree with her in this situation. "There was danger that Mary would think that being Jesus' mother would give her a special claim upon Him. She probably would like to have had the right to direct Him in His mission. . . . As Son of the Most High (God), and Savior of the world, Jesus must not have any earthly ties to keep Him from His mission or influence His actions. He must stand free to do the will of God. . . . The claims of God are more important than the ties of human relationship." —Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 147.

As believers, how do we balance the difference between the commandment to honor our parents (Exodus 20:12) and our duty to God?

MONDAY—JANUARY 12

FROM WATER TO WINE (John 2:1-11).

What did the water that Jesus used symbolize? John 2:6.

There is a deep spiritual lesson here. Changing water into wine symbolized something bigger than just a physical miracle. The water was not just any water. It was water used by the Jews for ritual⁶ washings. The wine was not just any wine. It was “the best.”

John uses this story to gently criticize part of the religion of Jesus’ day. Religious people were too interested in washing rituals (Matthew 15:1, 2). Washing is good. Washing helps a person to be clean. Washing can remind you to think about God. Without water, we could not live. In the same way, we could not live without God.



But Jesus replaces the water of ritual washings with something better. He replaces the water with fresh grape juice.

According to the following verses, what does wine symbolize? Matthew 26:27-29; Mark 14:23-25; Luke 22:17-20.

What do the following verses tell us about how important blood is to salvation?

Leviticus 17:11 _____

Colossians 1:13, 14 _____

Hebrews 10:19 _____

The first miracle Jesus did was to turn water into wine. Wine is a symbol of His blood. Jesus’ blood would be poured out for the sins of the world. Jesus’ blood is the only way through which we can be saved.

The water and the wine may not be perfect, but they are still symbols of what will happen.

⁶ritual—a religious act done to symbolize something spiritual. Ritual washings symbolized being cleansed from sin.



Jesus' blood was poured out for our sins.

Suppose someone asked you to explain what Jesus' shed blood means to you. How would you answer?

TUESDAY—JANUARY 13

**FORETASTE⁷ OF THE CROSS
(John 2:4).**

Jesus said “‘My [Jesus’] time has not yet come’ ” (John 2:4, NIV). What did He mean by “my time”? John 7:30; John 8:20.

The Greek word translated “time” in these verses is the word for “hour.” “Mine [my] hour [time] is not yet come” (John 2:4). This hour meant the “hour” of His arrest and crucifixion.

What did Jesus show by His first miracle? John 2:11.

What does the “glory” of Jesus mean in the book of John? John 12:23-25, 32, 33.

The glory of Jesus and the “hour” of Jesus point to the same. The hour of His suffering and death is the time when Jesus receives glory as our Savior. The Cross is the perfect example of Jesus' character as God.

The wedding story gives several examples of Jesus' death and resurrection.⁸ The wedding took place “on the third day.” This points to Jesus' resurrection (Matthew 16:21; Luke 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40; 1 Corinthians 15:4). Jesus turns water into wine, a symbol of His blood (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25, 26). In the wedding story, Jesus' “time” and His “glory” point to the Cross. And there are only two times in the book of John that Jesus speaks to His mother. Both times He calls her “woman”: in the wedding story (John 2:4) and at the Cross itself (John 19:25-27).

In a special way, this heartwarming wedding story is a “living parable” of the Cross. This story is also an example of the glory of God's character. The sign Jesus did at the wedding feast was an example of what He would do in surrendering Himself to suffering and death. In John 2:11, the disciples' response⁹ to that sign was an example of their future response to the Cross (John 20:8, 24-29). This is the same response of all

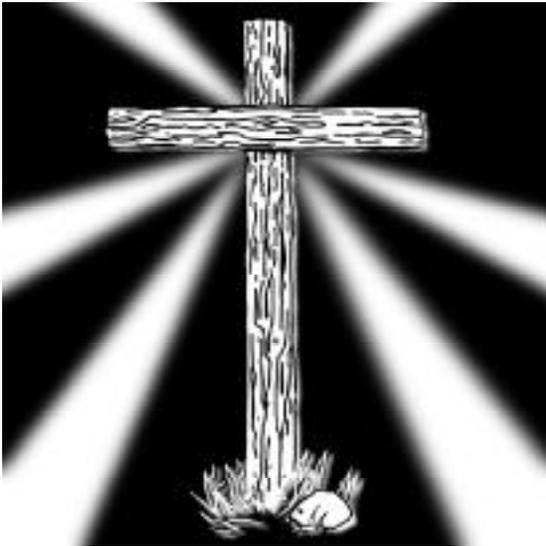
⁷foretaste—a look at what will happen in the future.

⁸resurrection—return to life.

⁹response—to answer by saying or doing something.

people who would come to believe in Jesus through the disciples' word (John 17:20; John 20:30, 31).

How would you explain to a non-believer how God's glory was shown by the Cross?



WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 14

**CLEANSING THE TEMPLE
(John 2:13-22).**

Read John 2:13-22. Then answer these questions:

1. When did Jesus go to the temple? What was the meaning of that special time? Exodus 12:24-27.

2. How did Jesus answer the people who challenged His authority (power)?

¹⁰compared—showed how things are the same.

¹¹dishonesty—not being honest.

How did His answer fit in with the true meaning of the Passover service? 1 Corinthians 5:7.

3. Why is Jesus' body compared¹⁰ to the temple? Exodus 25:1:8, 9; Exodus 25:17-22.

Animals were sold in the temple courtyards for the sacrifice. This was a needed service for travelers from far-off countries. People exchanged their money for special temple money so they could buy the animals.

Information from other writings suggests there was a lot of dishonesty¹¹ and corruption involved in the selling of animals and the exchange of money. But dishonesty does not seem to be the problem discussed in John. The problem in John is that business was done in a place that should have been devoted to teaching, worship, and prayer.

The same as in the wedding story, we see the theme of "something better" and a foretaste of the Cross. The temple was good. It was ordained (blessed) by God. But Jesus is here offering something even better than the temple: His body. The meaning of the Cross is better than anything we do to show our religion.

Think again about the selling of the animals for sacrifice. It was not bad. But it was where it was happening that made it bad. In our own life, how can things be good by themselves, but bad because of where and why we do them?

THURSDAY—JANUARY 15

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS (John 2:21, 22; Galatians 6:14).

John uses the stories of the cleansing of the temple and the wedding of Cana as living parables of the Cross. The Cross is better than the temple in Jerusalem, which was the greatest example of true religion, next to Jesus Himself in human form.

The same as John, where did Paul find “glory”? Galatians 6:14. In what ways should we have the same experience as Paul did?

In John 2:1-22, we see good things preventing the best thing from happening. It is the same today. Everyone tries to find meaning and value from life. But few people try to find meaning and value from Jesus. Instead, people try to find life by becoming rich, by doing things that earn praise, or by developing relationships with famous people.

Riches, work, and people can be good things. They make life interesting. But they are not life itself. No matter how many things you may have, you will never have enough. And what you do have will rust, rot, break, crash, or get scratched up. Athletes become broken and weak. Beauty queens grow old and wrinkled. And teachers become forgetful. People you love sometimes leave you, disrespect you, divorce you, and/

or die. Life is very unsafe if you depend only on these things.

To people who are depressed by a useless search for life, John offers something better: the Cross. The Cross tells us that there is a God who knows everything we have ever done. But He still loves and values us so much that He gave His life for us. “At the foot of the cross, we remember that Jesus would have died for one sinner. Then you may better understand the value of a soul.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ’s (Jesus’) Object Lessons*, p. 196. “The hand that keeps the worlds going in space . . . is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*,¹² p. 472. This should give us a higher sense of self-worth, no matter how poor or lowly we are in this life.



¹²apostles—leaders of the early Christian church after Jesus returned to heaven. Peter, James, and Paul were some of the apostles.

As Christians, we believe that Jesus died for us. So why do we still let ourselves get caught up in worldly things that cannot satisfy our needs? Romans 3:10-20. What is the only way not to get caught up in worldly things? Galatians 6:14.

FRIDAY—JANUARY 16

ADDITIONAL STUDY: People who have not studied deeply the book of John may be surprised to know that there are no parables in the book. There are only two sayings of Jesus that even come close to being parables. They are the account of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-21) and the description of the vine and the branches (John 15:1-8). But they are not really parables. They are different from Jesus' parables found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Rather than telling a specific story, these two sayings are examples to show a point. It is interesting to contrast¹³ these stories with the many parables found in Matthew 13 and Mark 4.

“Jesus' gift (the wine) to the marriage feast was a symbol. The water represented baptism into His death. The wine symbolized His blood given for the sins of the world. The water was

brought by human hands to fill the jars. But Jesus' word alone could give the water the power of life. So the water and the wine point to the Savior's death. But it is only by Jesus' power, working through faith, that the water and wine bring spiritual life to the soul and keep it spiritually alive.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 148, 149.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

No matter who we are, how much money we have, or how healthy we are, we all end up in the grave. Anything that does not answer the problem of death is always unsatisfactory. Why, then, can Jesus alone be the only satisfactory answer to the problem of death?

SUMMARY: John tells two stories about Jesus. These stories are living parables that teach spiritual lessons about Jesus. The main point is that Jesus is better than all human substitutes. Jesus replaces the beautiful religious services that fail to offer people the fullness of life. Instead, the Cross is the heart of what Jesus offers. If we are that important to God, then it does not matter whether we are rich or poor, great or small, famous or common. And it does not matter what other people think of us. We are more important to Jesus than the entire universe.

¹³contrast—show how things are different.