

CHAPTER 2

In the close of the foregoing chapter we had an account of the first disciples whom Jesus called, Andrew and Peter, Philip and Nathanael. These were the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb, ~~644~~ Revelation 14:4. Now, in this chapter, we have,

- I. The account of the first miracle which Jesus wrought — turning water into wine, at Cana of Galilee (v. 1-11), and his appearing at Capernaum (v. 12).
- II. The account of the first passover he kept at Jerusalem after he began his public ministry; his driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple (v. 13-17); and the sign he gave to those who quarrelled with him for it (v. 18-22), with an account of some almost believers, that followed him, thereupon, for some time (v. 23-25), but he knew them too well to put any confidence in them.

~~644~~ JOHN 2:1-11

WATER TURNED INTO WINE

We have here the story of Christ's miraculous conversion of water into wine at a marriage in Cana of Galilee. There were some few so well disposed as to believe in Christ, and to follow him, when he *did no miracle*; yet it was not likely that many should be wrought upon till he had something wherewith to answer those that asked, *What sign showest thou?* He could have wrought miracles before, could have made them the common actions of his life and the common entertainments of his friends; but, miracles being designed for the sacred and solemn seals of his doctrine, he began not to work any till he began to preach his doctrine. Now observe,

I. The occasion of this miracle. Maimonides observes it to be to the honour of Moses that all the signs he did in the wilderness he did *upon necessity*; we needed food, he brought us manna, and so did Christ. Observe,

1. The time: the *third day* after he came into Galilee. The evangelist keeps a journal of occurrences, for no day passed without something extraordinary done or said. Our Master filled up his time better than his servants do, and never lay down at night complaining, as the Roman emperor did, that he had *lost a day*.
2. The place: it was at Cana in Galilee, in the tribe of Asher (^(HEB)Joshua 19:28), of which, before, it was said that *he shall yield royal dainties*, ^(HAB)Genesis 49:20. Christ began to work miracles in an obscure corner of the country, remote from Jerusalem, which was the public scene of action, to show that he *sought not honour from men* (^(HAB)John 5:41), but would put honour *upon the lowly*. His doctrine and miracles would not be so much opposed by the plain and honest Galileans as they would be by the proud and prejudiced rabbies, politicians, and grandees, at Jerusalem.
3. The occasion itself was a *marriage*; probably one or both of the parties were akin to our Lord Jesus. The *mother of Jesus* is said to be *there*, and not to be *called*, as Jesus and his disciples were, which intimates that she was there as one at home. Observe the honour which Christ hereby put upon the ordinance of marriage, that he graced the solemnity of it, not only with his presence, but with his first miracle; because it was instituted and blessed in innocency, because by it he would still *seek a godly seed*, because it resembles the mystical union between him and his church, and because he foresaw that in the papal kingdom, while the marriage ceremony would be unduly *dignified* and advanced into a *sacrament*, the *married state* would be unduly *vilified*, as inconsistent with any sacred function. There was a *marriage* — *gamos*, a *marriage-feast*, to grace the solemnity. Marriages were usually celebrated with festivals (^(HEB)Genesis 29:22; ^(HAB)Judges 14:10), in token of joy and friendly respect, and for the confirming of love.
4. Christ and his mother and disciples were principal guests at this entertainment. *The mother of Jesus* (that was her most honourable title) *was there*; no mention being made of Joseph, we conclude him dead before this. Jesus was *called*, and he came, accepted the invitation, and feasted with them, to teach us to be *respectful* to our relations, and *sociable* with them, though they be mean. Christ was to come in a way different from that of John Baptist, who came *neither eating nor drinking*, ^(HAB)Matthew 11:18, 19. It is the wisdom of the prudent to study how to *improve* conversation rather than how to *decline* it.

(1.) *There was a marriage, and Jesus was called.* Note,

[1.] It is very desirable, when there is a *marriage*, to have Jesus Christ *present* at it; to have his spiritual gracious presence, to have the marriage owned and blessed by him: the *marriage* is then *honourable* indeed; and they that *marry in the Lord* (~~403~~ 1 Corinthians 7:39) do not marry *without him*.

[2.] They that would have Christ with them at their marriage must invite him by prayer; that is the messenger that must be sent to heaven for him; and he will come: *Thou shalt call, and I will answer.* And he will turn the water into wine.

(2.) The disciples also were invited, those five whom he had called (John 1), for as yet he had no more; they were his family, and were invited with him. They had thrown themselves upon his care, and they soon found that, though he had no wealth, he had good friends. Note,

[1.] Those that *follow* Christ shall *feast* with him, they shall *fare* as he *fares*, so he has *bespoken* for them (~~402~~ John 12:26): *Where I am, there shall my servant be also.*

[2.] Love to Christ is testified by a love to those that are his, for his sake; *our goodness extendeth not to him, but to the saints.* Calvin observes how *generous* the maker of the feast was, though he seems to have been but of small substance, to invite four or five strangers more than he thought of, because they were followers of Christ, which shows, saith he, that there is more of freedom, and liberality, and true friendship, in the conversation of some meaner persons than among many of higher rank.

II. The miracle itself. In which observe,

1. They *wanted wine*, v. 3.

(1.) There was *want* at a *feast*; though much was provided, yet all was spent. While we are in this world we sometimes find ourselves *in straits*, even then when we think ourselves in the *fulness of our sufficiency*. If always *spending*, perhaps all is spent ere we are aware.

(2.) There was *want* at a *marriage feast*. Note, They who, being *married*, are come to *care for the things of the world* must expect *trouble in the flesh*, and count upon disappointment.

(3.) It should seem, Christ and his disciples were the occasion of this want, because there was more company than was expected when the provision was made; but they who straiten themselves for Christ shall not lose by him.

2. The *mother of Jesus* solicited him to assist her friends in this strait. We are told (v. 3-5) what passed between Christ and his mother upon this occasion.

(1.) She acquaints him with the difficulty they were in (v. 3): *She saith unto him, They have no wine.* Some think that she did not expect from him any miraculous supply (he having as yet wrought no miracle), but that she would have him make some *decent* excuse to the company, and make the best of it, to save the bridegroom's reputation, and keep him in countenance; or (as Calvin suggests) would have him make up the want of wine with some holy profitable discourse. But, most probably, she looked for a miracle; for she knew he was now appearing as the great prophet, like unto Moses, who so often seasonably supplied the wants of Israel; and, though this was his first public miracle, perhaps he had sometimes relieved her and her husband in their low estate. The bridegroom might have sent out for more wine, but she was for going to the fountain-head. Note,

[1.] We ought to be concerned for the wants and straits of our friends, and not *seek our own things* only.

[2.] In our own and our friends' straits it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to Christ by prayer.

[3.] In our addresses to Christ, we must not prescribe to him, but humbly spread our case before him, and then *refer ourselves* to him to do as he pleases.

(2.) He gave her a reprimand for it, for he saw more amiss in it than we do, else he had not treated it thus. — Here is,

[1.] The rebuke itself: *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* As many as Christ loves, he rebukes and chastens. He calls her *woman*, not *mother*. When we begin to be assuming, we should be reminded what we are, *men* and *women*, frail, foolish, and corrupt. The question, *ti emoi kai soi*, might be read, *What is that to me and thee?* What is it to us if they do want? But it is always as we render it, *What have I to do with thee?* as ^{<0112>}Judges

11:12; ⁽¹⁶⁾2 Samuel 16:10; ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾Ezra 4:3; ⁽⁸⁹⁾Matthew 8:29. It therefore bespeaks a resentment, yet not at all inconsistent with the reverence and subjection which he paid to his mother, according to the fifth commandment (⁽¹⁰⁵⁾Luke 2:51); for there was a time when it was Levi's praise that he *said to his father, I have not known him*, ⁽⁶³⁰⁾Deuteronomy 33:9. Now this was intended to be, *First*, A check to his mother for interposing in a matter which was the act of his Godhead, which had no dependence on her, and which she was not the mother of. Though, as man, he was David's Son and hers; yet, as God, he was David's Lord and hers, and he would have her know it. The greatest advancements must not make us forget ourselves and our place, nor the familiarity to which the covenant of grace admits us breed contempt. irreverence, or any kind or degree of presumption. *Secondly*, It was an instruction to others of his relations (many of whom were present here) that they must never expect him to have any regard to his kindred according to the flesh, in his working miracles, or that therein he should gratify them, who in this matter were no more to him than other people. In the things of God we must not *know faces*. *Thirdly*, It is a standing testimony against that idolatry which he foresaw his church would in after-ages sink into, in giving undue honours to the virgin Mary, a crime which the Roman catholics, as they call themselves, are notoriously guilty of, when they call her the *queen of heaven*, the *salvation of the world*, their *mediatrix*, their *life and hope*; not only depending upon her merit and intercession, but beseeching her to *command her Son* to do them good: *Monstra te esse matrem — Show that thou art his mother. Jussu matris impera salvatori — Lay thy maternal commands on the Saviour*. Does he not here expressly say, when a miracle was to be wrought, even in the days of his humiliation, and his mother did but tacitly hint an intercession, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* This was plainly designed either to *prevent* or *aggravate* such gross idolatry, such horrid blasphemy. The Son of God is appointed our Advocate with the Father; but the mother of our Lord was never designed to be our advocate with the Son.

[2.] The reason of this rebuke: *Mine hour is not yet come*. For every thing Christ did, and that was done to him, he had *his hour*, the *fixed* time and the *fittest* time, which was punctually observed. *First*, “*Mine hour for working miracles is not yet come.*” Yet afterwards he wrought this, before the hour, because he foresaw it would confirm the faith of his infant disciples (v. 11), which was the end of all his miracles: so that this was an

earnest of the many miracles he would work when his *hour was come*. *Secondly*, “Mine hour of working miracles *openly* is *not yet come*; therefore do not talk of it thus *publicly*.” *Thirdly*, “*It not the hour* of my exemption from thy authority *yet come*, now that I have begun to act as a prophet?” So Gregory Nyssen. *Fourthly*, “Mine hour for working *this miracle* is not yet come.” His mother moved him to help them *when the wine began to fail* (so it may be read, v. 3), but his hour was not yet come till it was quite spent, and there was a *total want*; not only to prevent any suspicion of mixing some of the wine that was left with the water, but to teach us that man's extremity is God's opportunity to appear for the help and relief of his people. Then *his hour is come* when we are reduced to the utmost strait, and know not what to do. This encouraged those that waited for him to believe that though his hour was not *yet come* it would come. Note, The delays of mercy are not to be construed the denials of prayer. *At the end it shall speak*.

(3.) Notwithstanding this, she encouraged herself with expectations that he would help her friends in this strait, for she bade the servants *observe his orders*, v. 5.

[1.] She took the reproof very submissively, and did not reply to it. It is best not to deserve reproof from Christ, but next best to be meek and quiet under it, and to count it a kindness, ^{<93>}Psalm 141:5.

[2.] She kept her hope in Christ's mercy, that he would yet grant her desire. When we come to God in Christ for any mercy, two things discourage us: — *First*, Sense of *our own follies* and infirmities “Surely such imperfect prayers as ours cannot speed.” *Secondly*, Sense of *our Lord's frowns and rebukes*. Afflictions are continued, deliverances delayed, and God seems angry at our prayers. This was the case of the mother of our Lord here, and yet she encourages herself with hope that he will at length give in an answer of peace, to teach us to wrestle with God by faith and fervency in prayer, even when he seems in his providence to walk contrary to us. We must *against hope believe in hope*, ^{<94>}Romans 4:18.

[3.] She directed the servants to have an eye *to him* immediately, and not to make their applications to her, as it is probable *they had done*. She quits all pretensions to an *influence* upon him, or *intercession* with him; let their souls *wait only* on him, ^{<95>}Psalm 62:5.

[4.] She directed them punctually to observe his orders, without disputing, or asking questions. Being conscious to herself of a fault in *prescribing* to him, she cautions the servants to take heed of the same fault, and to attend both his time and his way for supply: “*Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*, though you may think it ever so improper. If he saith, Give the guests water, when they call for wine, do it. If he saith, Pour out from the bottoms of the vessels that are spent, do it. He can make a few drops of wine multiply to so many draughts.” Note, Those that expect Christ's *favours* must with an implicit obedience observe his *orders*. The way of duty is the way to mercy; and Christ's methods must not be objected against.

(4.) Christ did at length miraculously supply them; for he is often better than his word, but never worse.

[1.] The miracle itself was *turning water into wine*; the substance of water acquiring a new form, and having all the accidents and qualities of wine. Such a *transformation* is a *miracle*; but the popish *transubstantiation*, the substance changed, the accidents remaining the same, is a monster. By this Christ showed himself to be the God of nature, who maketh the earth to bring forth wine, ^{<104>}Psalm 109:14, 15. The extracting of the blood of the grape every year from the moisture of the earth is no less a work of power, though, being according to the common law of nature, it is not such a work of wonder, as this. The beginning of Moses's miracles was turning water into blood (^{<119>}Exodus 4:9; 7:20), the beginning of Christ's miracles was turning water into wine; which intimates the difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. The curse of the law turns water into blood, common comforts into bitterness and terror; the blessing of the gospel turns water into wine. Christ hereby showed that his errand into the world was to heighten and improve creature-comforts to all believers, and make them comforts indeed. Shiloh is said to *wash his garments in wine* (^{<111>}Genesis 49:11), the water for washing being *turned into wine*. And the gospel call is, *Come ye to the waters, and buy wine*, ^{<251>}Isaiah 55:1.

[2.] The circumstances of it magnified it and freed it from all suspicion of cheat or collusion; for,

First, It was done in water-pots (v. 6): *There were set there six water-pots of stone*. Observe,

1. For what use these water-pots were intended: for the legal purifications from ceremonial pollutions enjoined by the law of God,

and many more by the tradition of the elders. The *Jews eat not, except they wash often* (^{<40B>}Mark 7:3), and they used much water in their washing, for which reason here were six large water-pots provided. It was a saying among them, *Qui multum utitur aqua in lavando, multas consequetur in hoc mundo divitias* — *He who uses much water in washing will gain much wealth in this world.*

2. To what use Christ put them, quite different from what they were intended for; to be the receptacles of the miraculous wine. Thus Christ came to bring in the grace of the gospel, which is as *wine*, that cheereth God and man (^{<09B>}Judges 9:13), instead of the shadows of the law, which were as water, *weak and beggarly elements*. These were *water-pots*, that had never been used to have wine in them; and of *stone*, which is not apt to retain the scent of former liquors, if ever they had had wine in them. They contained *two or three firkins apiece*; two or three *measures, baths, or ephahs*; the quantity is uncertain, but very considerable. We may be sure that it was not intended to be all drunk at this feast, but for a further kindness to the new-married couple, as the multiplied oil was to the poor widow, out of which she might *pay her debt, and live of the rest*, (^{<01>}2 Kings 4:7. Christ gives like himself, gives abundantly, according to his riches in glory. It is the penman's language to say, *They contained two or three firkins*, for the Holy Spirit could have ascertained just how much; thus (as ^{<06>}John 6:19) teaching us to speak cautiously, and not confidently, of those things of which we have not good assurance.

Secondly, The water-pots were filled *up to the brim* by the servants at Christ's word, v. 7. As Moses, the servant of the Lord, when God bade him, went to the rock, to draw water; so these servants, when Christ bade them, went to the water, to fetch wine. Note, Since no difficulties can be opposed to the arm of God's power, no improbabilities are to be objected against the word of his command.

Thirdly, The miracle was wrought suddenly, and in such a manner as greatly magnified it.

a. As soon as they had filled the water-pots, presently he said, *Draw out now* (v. 8), and it was done,

(a.) Without any ceremony, in the eye of the spectators. One would have thought, as Naaman, he should have come out, and *stood*, and

called on the name of God, ^{<171>}2 Kings 5:11. No, he sits still in his place, says not a word, but *wills* the thing, and so works it. Note, Christ does great things and marvellous *without noise*, works manifest changes in a hidden way. Sometimes Christ, in working miracles, used words and signs, but it was *for their sakes that stood by*, ^{<181>}John 11:42.

(b.) Without any hesitation or uncertainty in his own breast. He did not say, *Draw out now*, and let me *taste it*, questioning whether the thing were done as he willed it or no; but with the greatest assurance imaginable, though it was his *first miracle*, he recommends it to the master of the feast *first*. As he knew what he *would* do, so he knew what he *could* do, and made no essay in his work; but all was good, very good, even in the beginning.

b. Our Lord Jesus directed the servants,

(a.) To *draw it out*; not to let it alone in the vessel, to be admired, but to *draw it out*, to be drank. Note,

[a.] Christ's works are all *for use*; he gives no man a talent to be *buried*, but to be *traded with*. Has he turned thy water into wine, given thee knowledge and grace? It is to *profit withal*; and therefore *draw out now*.

[b.] Those that would know Christ must make trial of him, must attend upon him in the use of ordinary means, and then may expect extraordinary influence. That which is *laid up* for all that *fear God* is *wrought for those that trust in him* (^{<1819>}Psalm 31:19), that by the exercise of faith *draw out* what is *laid up*.

(b.) To present it to *the governor of the feast*. Some think that this *governor of the feast* was only the chief guest, that sat at the upper end of the table; but, if so, surely our Lord Jesus should have had that place, for he was, upon all accounts, the principal guest; but it seems another had the uppermost room, probably one that *loved it* (^{<1236>}Matthew 23:6), and *chose it*, ^{<247>}Luke 14:7. And Christ, according to his own rule, *sat down in the lowest room*; but, though he was not treated as the Master of the feast, he kindly approved himself a friend to the feast, and, if not its founder, yet its best benefactor. Others think that this *governor* was the inspector and monitor of the feast: the same

with Plutarch's *symposiarcha*, whose office it was to see that each had enough, and none did exceed, and that there were no indecencies or disorders. Note, Feasts have need of governors, because too many, when they are at feasts, have not the government of themselves. Some think that this *governor* was the *chaplain*, some priest or Levite that craved a blessing and gave thanks, and Christ would have the cup brought to him, that he might bless it, and bless God for it; for the extraordinary tokens of Christ's presence and power were not to supersede, or jostle out, the ordinary rules and methods of piety and devotion.

Fourthly, The wine which was thus miraculously provided was of the best and richest kind, which was acknowledged by the governor of the feast; and that it was really so, and not his fancy, is certain, because he knew not whence it was, v. 9, 10.

1. It was certain that this was *wine*. The governor knew this when he drank it, though he knew not *whence it was*; the servants knew whence it was, but had not yet tasted it. if the taster had seen the drawing of it, or the drawers had had the tasting of it, something might have been imputed to fancy; but now no room is left for suspicion.

2. That it was the best wine. Note, Christ's works commend themselves even to those that know not their author. The products of miracles were always the best in their kind. This wine had a *stronger body*, and *better flavour*, than ordinary. This the governor of the feast takes notice of to the bridegroom, with an air of pleasantness, as *uncommon*.

(1.) The common method was otherwise. Good wine is brought out to the best advantage at the beginning of a feast, when the guests have their heads clear and their appetites fresh, and can relish it, and will commend it; but *when they have well drunk*, when their heads are confused, and their appetites palled, good wine is but thrown away upon them, worse will serve then. See the vanity of all the pleasures of sense; they soon surfeit, but never satisfy; the longer they are enjoyed, the less pleasant they grow.

(2.) This bridegroom obliged his friends with a reserve of the best wine for the grace-cup: *Thou hast kept the good wine until now*; not knowing to whom they were indebted for this good wine, he returns

the thanks of the table to the bridegroom. *She did not know that I gave her corn and wine,* ^{<328>}Hosea 2:8. Now,

[1.] Christ, in providing thus plentifully for the guests, though he hereby allows a sober cheerful use of wine, especially in times of rejoicing (^{<480>}Nehemiah 8:10), yet he does not invalidate his own caution, nor invade it, in the least, which is, that our hearts be not *at any time*, no not at a marriage feast, *overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness,* ^{<273>}Luke 21:34. When Christ provided so much *good wine* for them that had *well drunk*, he intended to try their sobriety, and to teach them *how to abound*, as well as *how to want*. Temperance *per force* is a thankless virtue; but if divine providence gives us abundance of the delights of sense, and divine grace enables us to use them moderately, this is self-denial that is praiseworthy. He also intended that some should be left for the confirmation of the truth of the miracle to the faith of others. And we have reason to think that the guests at this table were so well *taught*, or at least were now so well awed by the presence of Christ, that none of them abused this wine to excess. Theses two considerations, drawn from this story, may be sufficient at any time to fortify us against temptations to intemperance: *First*, That our meat and drink are the *gifts of God's bounty* to us, and we owe our liberty to use them, and our comfort in the use of them, to the mediation of Christ; it is therefore ungrateful and impious to abuse them. *Secondly*, That, wherever we are, Christ has his eye upon us; we should *eat bread before God* (^{<182>}Exodus 18:12), and then we should not *feed ourselves without fear*.

[2.] He has given us a specimen of the method he takes in dealing with those that deal with him, which is, to reserve the *best* for the *last*, and therefore they must *deal upon trust*. The recompence of their services and sufferings is reserved for the other world; it is a glory *to be revealed*. The pleasures of sin give their colour in the cup, but *at the last bite*; but the pleasures of religion will be *pleasures for evermore*.

III. In the conclusion of this story (v. 11) we are told,

1. That this was *the beginning of miracles* which Jesus did. Many miracles had been wrought *concerning* him at his birth and baptism, and he himself was the greatest miracle of all; but this was the first that was wrought *by* him. He could have wrought miracles when he disputed with the doctors,

but his hour was not come. He had power, but there was a *time of the hiding of his power*.

2. That herein he *manifested his glory*; hereby he proved himself to be the Son of God, and his glory to be that of the only-begotten of the Father. He also discovered the nature and end of his office; the power of a God, and the grace of a Saviour, appearing in all his miracles, and particularly in this, manifested the glory of the long-expected Messiah.

3. That *his disciples believed on him*. Those whom he had called (John 1), who had seen no miracle, and yet followed him, now saw this, shared in it, and had their faith strengthened by it. Note,

(1.) Even the faith that is true is at first but weak. The strongest men were once babes, so were the strongest Christians.

(2.) The manifesting of the glory of Christ is the great confirmation of the faith of Christians.

~~<BIB>~~ JOHN 2:12-22

TEMPLE-MERCHANDISE PUNISHED

Here we have,

I. The short visit Christ made to Capernaum, v. 12. It was a large and populous city, about a day's journey from Cana; it is called *his own city* (~~<BIB>~~ Matthew 9:1), because he made it his head-quarters in Galilee, and what little rest he had was there. It was a place of concourse, and *therefore* Christ chose it, that the fame of his doctrine and miracles might thence spread the further. Observe,

1. The company that attended him thither: *his mother, his brethren, and his disciples*. Wherever Christ went,

(1.) He *would not* go alone, but would take those with him who had put themselves under his guidance, that he might instruct them, and that they might attest his miracles.

(2.) He *could not* go alone, but they would follow him, because they liked the sweetness either of his doctrine or of his wine, ~~<BIB>~~ John 6:26. His

mother, though he had lately given her to understand that in the works of his ministry he should pay no more respect to her than to any other person, yet followed him; not to intercede with him, but to learn of him. His *brethren* also and relations, who were at the marriage and were wrought upon by the miracle there, and *his disciples*, who attended him wherever he went. It should seem, people were more affected with Christ's miracles at first than they were afterwards, when custom made them seem less strange.

2. His continuance there, which was at this time *not many days*, designing now only to *begin* the acquaintance he would afterwards *improve* there. Christ was still upon the remove, would not confine his usefulness to *one* place, because *many* needed him. And he would teach his followers to look upon themselves but as *sojourners* in this world, and his ministers to follow their opportunities, and go where their work led them. We do not now find Christ in the synagogues, but he privately instructed his friends, and thus entered upon his work *by degrees*. It is good for young ministers to accustom themselves to pious and edifying discourse in private, that they may with the better preparation, and greater awe, approach their public work. He did not stay long at Capernaum, because the passover was at hand, and he must attend it at Jerusalem; for every thing is beautiful in its season. The less good must give way to the greater, and all the dwellings of Jacob must give place to the gates of Zion.

II. The passover he kept at Jerusalem; it is the *first* after his baptism, and the evangelist takes notice of all the passovers he kept henceforward, which were four in all, the *fourth* that at which he suffered (three years after this), and half a year was now past since his baptism. Christ, being *made under the law*, observed the passover at Jerusalem; see ⁽¹²²⁷⁾Exodus 23:17. Thus he taught us by his example a strict observance of divine institutions, and a diligent attendance on religious assemblies. He went up to Jerusalem when *the passover was at hand*, that he might be there *with the first*. It is called *the Jews' passover*, because it was peculiar to them (Christ is *our* Passover); now shortly God will no longer own it for his. Christ kept the passover at Jerusalem yearly, ever since he was twelve years old, in obedience to the law; but now that he has entered upon his public ministry we may expect something more from him than before; and two things we are here told he did there: —

1. He *purged the temple*, v. 14-17. Observe here,

(1.) The first place we find him in at Jerusalem was the *temple*, and, it should seem, he did not make any public appearance till he came thither; for his presence and preaching there were that glory of the latter house which was to *exceed the glory of the former*, ^{<301B>}Haggai 2:9. It was foretold (^{<301B>}Malachi 3:1): *I will send my messenger*, John Baptist; he never preached in the temple, but *the Lord, whom ye seek*, he shall *suddenly come to his temple*, suddenly after the appearing of John Baptist; so that this was the time, and the temple the place, when, and where, the Messiah was to be expected.

(2.) The first work we find him at in the temple was the *purging* of it; for so it was foretold there (^{<301B>}Malachi 3:2, 3): *He shall sit as a refiner and purify the sons of Levi*. Now was come the *time of reformation*. Christ came to be the great reformer; and, according to the method of the reforming kings of Judah, he first *purged out* what was amiss (and that used to be passover-work too, as in Hezekiah's time, ^{<404>}2 Chronicles 30:14, 15, and Josiah's, ^{<234>}2 Kings 23:4, etc.), and then taught them to do well. First *purge out the old leaven*, and then *keep the feast*. Christ's design in coming into the world was to reform the world; and he expects that all who come to him should reform their hearts and lives, ^{<131B>}Genesis 35:2. And this he has taught us by purging the temple. See here,

[1.] What were the corruptions that were to be purged out. He found a market in one of the courts of the temple, that which was called the *court of the Gentiles*, within the *mountain of that house*. There, *First*, They sold *oxen, and sheep, and doves*, for sacrifice; we will suppose, not for common use, but for the convenience of those who came out of the country, and could not bring their sacrifices *in kind* along with them; see ^{<54B>}Deuteronomy 14:24-26. This *market* perhaps had been kept by the pool of Bethesda (^{<401B>}John 5:2), but was admitted into the temple by the chief priests, for filthy lucre; for, no doubt, the rents for standing there, and fees for searching the beasts sold there, and certifying that they were *without blemish*, would be a considerable revenue to them. Great corruptions in the church owe their rise to the love of money, ^{<305>}1 Timothy 6:5, 10. *Secondly*, They *changed money*, for the convenience of those that were to pay a half-shekel *in specie* every year, by way of poll, for the service of the tabernacle (^{<401B>}Exodus 30:12), and no doubt they got by it.

[2.] What course our Lord took to purge out those corruptions. He had seen these in the temple formerly, when he was in a private station; but

never went about to drive them out till now, when he had taken upon him the public character of a prophet. He did not complain to the chief priests, for he knew they countenanced those corruptions. But he himself,

*First, Drove out the sheep and oxen, and those that sold them, out of the temple. He never used force to drive any into the temple, but only to drive those out that profaned it. He did not seize the sheep and oxen for himself, did not *distrain* and impound them, though he found them *damage faissant* — *actual trespassers* upon his Father's ground; he only drove them out, and their owners with them. He made a scourge of *small cords*, which probably they had led their sheep and oxen with, and thrown them away upon the ground, whence Christ gathered them. Sinners prepare the scourges with which they themselves will be driven out from the temple of the Lord. He did not make a scourge to chastise the offenders (his punishments are of another nature), but only to drive out the cattle; he aimed no further than at reformation. See ^{<518>}Romans 13:3, 4; ^{<718>}2 Corinthians 10:8.*

Secondly, He poured out the changers' money, to kerma — the small money — the Nummorum Famulus. In pouring out the money, he showed his contempt of it; he threw it to the ground, to the earth as it was. In overthrowing the tables, he showed his displeasure against those that make religion a matter of worldly gain. Money-changers in the temple are the scandal of it. Note, In reformation, it is good to make thorough work; he drove them all out; and not only threw out the money, but, in overturning the tables, threw out the trade too.

*Thirdly, He said to them that sold doves (sacrifices for the poor), Take these things hence. The doves, though they took up less room, and were a less nuisance than the oxen and sheep, yet must not be allowed there. The sparrows and swallows were welcome, that were left to God's providence (^{<848>}Psalm 84:3), but not the doves, that were appropriated to man's profit. God's temple must not be made a pigeon-house. But see Christ's prudence in his zeal. When he drove out the sheep and oxen, the owners might follow them; when he poured out the money, they might gather it up again; but, if he had turned the doves flying, perhaps they could not have been retrieved; therefore to them that sold doves he said, *Take these things hence*. Note, Discretion must always guide and govern our zeal, that we do nothing unbecoming ourselves, or mischievous to others.*

Fourthly, He gave them a good reason for what he did: *Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise*. Reason for conviction should accompany force for correction.

a. Here is a reason why they should not profane the temple, because it was the *house of God*, and not to be made a house of merchandise.

Merchandise is a good thing in the exchange, but not in the temple. This was,

(a.) to *alienate* that which was dedicated to the honour of God; it was *sacrilege*; it was robbing God.

(b.) It was to *debase* that which was solemn and awful, and to make it mean.

(c.) It was to disturb and distract those services in which men ought to be most solemn, serious, and intent. It was particularly an affront to the *sons of the stranger* in their worship to be forced to herd themselves with the sheep and oxen, and to be distracted in their worship by the noise of a market, for this market was kept in the court of the Gentiles.

(d.) It was to make the business of religion subservient to a secular interest; for the holiness of the place must advance the market, and promote the sale of their commodities. Those make God's house a house of merchandise,

[a.] Whose minds are filled with cares about worldly business when they are attending on religious exercises, as those, ^{<3005>}Amos 8:5; ^{<3005>}Ezekiel 33:31.

[b.] Who perform divine offices for filthy lucre, and sell the gifts of the Holy Ghost, ^{<408>}Acts 8:18.

b. Here is a reason why he was concerned to purge it, because it was *his Father's house*. And,

(a.) Therefore he had authority to purge it, for he was faithful, as a Son *over his own house*. ^{<3005>}Hebrews 3:5, 6. In calling God his Father, he intimates that he was the Messiah, of whom it was said, *He shall build a house for my name, and I will be his Father*, ^{<1073>}2 Samuel 7:13, 14.

(b.) Therefore he had a zeal for the purging of it: "It is *my Father's house*, and therefore I cannot bear to see it profaned, and *him*

dishonoured.” Note, If God be our Father in heaven, and it be therefore our desire that his name may be sanctified, it cannot but be our grief to see it polluted. Christ's purging the temple thus may justly be reckoned among his *wonderful works*. *Inter omnia signa quae fecit Dominus, hoc mihi videtur esse mirabilius — Of all Christ's wonderful works this appears to me the most wonderful.* — Hieron. Considering,

[a.] That he did it without the *assistance* of any of his *friends*; probably it had been no hard matter to have raised the *mob*, who had a great veneration for the temple, against these profaners of it; but Christ never countenanced any thing that was tumultuous or disorderly. There was one to *uphold*, but his own arm did it.

[b.] That he did it without the *resistance* of any of his *enemies*, either the market-people themselves, or the chief priests that gave them their licences, and had the *posse templi — temple force*, at their command. But the corruption was too plain to be justified; sinners' own consciences are reformers' best friends; yet that was not all, there was a divine power put forth herein, a power over the spirits of men; and in this non-resistance of theirs that scripture was fulfilled (³⁰²Malachi 3:2, 3), *Who shall stand when he appeareth?*

Fifthly, Here is the remark which his disciples made upon it (v. 17): *They remembered that it was written, The Zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.* They were somewhat surprised at first to see him to whom they were directed as the *Lamb of God* in such a heat, and him whom they believed to be the *King of Israel* take so little state upon him as to do this himself; but one scripture came to their thoughts, which taught them to reconcile this action both with the meekness of the *Lamb of God* and with the majesty of the *King of Israel*; for David, speaking of the Messiah, takes notice of his *zeal for God's house*, as so great that it even *ate him up*, it made him forget himself, ³⁰³Psalms 69:9. Observe,

1. The disciples came to understand the meaning of what Christ did, by remembering the scriptures: *They remembered now that it was written.* Note, The word of God and the works of God do mutually explain and illustrate each other. Dark scriptures are expounded by their accomplishment in providence, and difficult providences are made easy by comparing them with the scriptures. See of what great use it is to the disciples of Christ to be *ready* and *mighty* in the scriptures, and to have

their memories well stored with scripture truths, by which they will be *furnished for every good work*,

2. The scripture they remembered was very apposite: *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*. David was in this a type of Christ that he was *zealous for God's house*, ^{<H1D>}Psalm 132:2, 3. What he did for it was *with all his might*; see ^{<R1D>}1 Chronicles 29:2. The latter part of that verse (^{<R5D>}Psalm 69:9) is applied to Christ (^{<R5D>}Romans 15:3), as the former part of it here. All the graces that were to be found among the Old-Testament saints were eminently in Christ, and particularly this of zeal for the house of God, and in them, as they were patterns to us, so they were types of him. Observe,

(1.) Jesus Christ was zealously affected to the house of God, his church: he loved it, and was always jealous for its honour and welfare.

(2.) This zeal did even *eat him up*; it made him *humble* himself, and *spend* himself, and *expose* himself. *My zeal has consumed me*, ^{<R1D>}Psalm 119:139. Zeal for the house of God forbids us to consult our own credit, ease, and safety, when they come in competition with our duty and Christ's service, and sometimes carries on our souls in our duty so far and so fast that our bodies cannot keep pace with them, and makes us as deaf as our Master was to those who suggested, *Spare thyself*. The grievances here redressed might seem but small, and such as should have been connived at; but such was Christ's zeal that he could not bear even *those that sold and bought in the temple*. *Si ibi ebrios inveniret quid faceret Dominus!* (saith St. Austin.) *If he had found drunkards in the temple, how much more would he have been displeased!*

2. Christ, having thus purged the temple, gave a sign to those who demanded it to prove his authority for so doing. Observe here,

(1.) Their demand of a sign: *Then answered the Jews*, that is the multitude of the people, with their leaders. Being Jews, they should rather have stood by him, and assisted him to vindicate the honour of their temple; but, instead of this, they objected against it. note, Those who apply themselves in good earnest to the work of reformation must expect to meet with opposition. When they could object nothing against the thing itself, they questioned his authority to do it: "*What sign showest thou unto us, to prove thyself authorized and commissioned to do these things?*" It was indeed a good work to purge the temple; but what had he to do to

undertake it, who was in no office there? They looked upon it as an act of jurisdiction, and that he must prove himself *a prophet, yea, more than a prophet*. But was not the thing itself sign enough? His ability to drive so many from their posts, without opposition, was a proof of his authority; he that was armed with such a divine power was surely armed with a divine commission. *What ailed these buyers and sellers, that they fled, that they were driven back?* Surely it was *at the presence of the Lord* (^{4B4E}Psalm 114:5, 7), no less a presence.

(2.) Christ's answer to this demand, v. 19. He did not immediately work a miracle to convince them, but gave them a sign in something *to come*, the truth of which must appear by the event, according to (^{4B2D}Deuteronomy 18:21, 22).

Now,

[1.] The sign that he gives them is his own *death and resurrection*. He refers them to that which would be, *First, His last sign*. If they would not be convinced by what they saw and heard, let them *wait*. *Secondly, The great sign* to prove him to be the Messiah; for concerning him it was foretold that he should be bruised (^{251E}Isaiah 53:5), *cut off* (^{210E}Daniel 9:26), and yet that he should not see corruption, (^{496D}Psalm 16:10). These things were fulfilled in the blessed Jesus, and therefore *truly he was the Son of God*, and had authority in the temple, his Father's house.

[2.] He foretels his death and resurrection, not in plain terms, as he often did to his disciples, but in figurative expressions; as afterwards, when he gave this for a sign, he called it the *sign of the prophet Jonas*, so here, *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*. Thus he spoke in parables to those who were willingly ignorant, that *they might not perceive*, (^{4E3E}Matthew 13:13, 14). Those that will not see shall not see. Nay, this figurative speech used here proved such a *stumbling-block* to them that it was produced in evidence against him at his trial to prove him a blasphemer. (^{416D}Matthew 26:60, 61). Had they humbly asked him the meaning of what he said, he would have told them, and it had been a savour of life unto life to them, but they were resolved to cavil, and it proved a savour of death unto death. They that would not be convinced were hardened, and the manner of expressing this prediction occasioned the accomplishment of the prediction itself. *First*, He foretels his death by the Jews' malice, in these words, *Destroy you this temple*; that is, "You will destroy it, I know you will. I will permit you to destroy it." Note,

Christ, even at the beginning of his ministry, had a clear foresight of all his sufferings at the end of it, and yet went on cheerfully in it. It is good, at *setting out*, to expect the *worst*. *Secondly*, He foretels his resurrection by his own power: *In three days I will raise it up*. There were others that *were raised*, but Christ raised himself, resumed his own life.

[3.] He chose to express this by *destroying* and *re-edifying* the temple, *First*, Because he was now to justify himself in purging the temple, which they had profaned; as if he had said, “You that defile one temple will destroy another; and I will prove my authority to *purge* what you have *defiled* by *raising* what you will *destroy*.” The profaning of the temple is the *destroying* of it, and its reformation its *resurrection*. *Secondly*, Because the death of Christ was indeed the destruction of the Jewish temple, the procuring cause of it; and his resurrection was the raising up of another temple, the gospel church, ^{<ref>Zechariah 6:12}. The ruins of their place and *nation* (^{<ref>John 11:48}) were the riches of the world. See ^{<ref>Amos 9:11}; ^{<ref>Acts 15:16}.

(3.) Their cavil at this answer: “*Forty and six years was this temple in building*, v. 20. Temple work was always slow work, and canst thou make such quick work of it?” Now here,

[1.] They show *some knowledge*; they could tell how long the temple was in building. Dr. Lightfoot computes that it was just forty-six years from the founding of Zerubbabel's temple, in the second year of Cyrus, to the complete settlement of the temple service, in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes; and the same from Herod's beginning to build this temple, in the 18th year of his reign, to this very time, when the Jews said that this as just forty-six years: *okodomethe* — *hath this temple been built*.

[2.] They show *more ignorance*, *First*, Of the *meaning of Christ's words*. Note, Men often run into gross mistakes by understanding that literally which the scripture speaks figuratively. What abundance of mischief has been done by interpreting, *This is my body*, after a corporal and carnal manner! *Secondly*, Of the *almighty power of Christ*, as if he could do no more than another man. Had they known that this was he who *built all things* in six days they would not have made it such an absurdity that he should build a temple in three days.

(4.) A vindication of Christ's answer from their cavil. The difficulty is soon solved by explaining the terms: *He spoke of the temple of his body*, v.

21. Though Christ had discovered a great respect for the temple, in *purging* it, yet he will have us know that the holiness of it, which he was so jealous for, was but *typical*, and leads us to the consideration of another temple of which that was but a shadow, the substance being Christ, ^{<309>}Hebrews 9:9; ^{<327>}Colossians 2:17. Some think that when he said, Destroy *this* temple, he pointed to his own body, or laid his hand upon it; however, it is certain that he *spoke of the temple of his body*. Note, The body of Christ is the true temple, of which that at Jerusalem was a type.

[1.] Like the temple, it was built by immediate divine direction: “A *body hast thou prepared me,*” ^{<339>}1 Chronicles 28:19.

[2.] Like the temple, it was a *holy house*; it is called *that holy thing*.

[3.] It was, like the temple, the habitation of God's glory; there the eternal Word dwelt, the true shechinah. He is *Emmanuel* — *God with us*.

[4.] The temple was the place and *medium* of intercourse between God and Israel: there God revealed himself to them; there they presented themselves and their services to him. Thus by Christ God speaks to us, and we speak to him. Worshippers looked *towards* that house, ^{<180>}1 Kings 8:30, 35. So we must worship God with an eye to Christ.

(5.) A reflection which the disciples made upon this, long after, inserted here, to illustrate the story (v. 22): *When he was risen from the dead*, some years after, *his disciples remembered that he had said this*. We found them, 5:17, remembering what had been *written before of him*, and here we find them remembering what they had *heard from him*. Note, The memories of Christ's disciples should be like the treasure of the good house-holder, furnished with things both *new and old*, ^{<152>}Matthew 13:52. Now observe,

[1.] *When they remembered that saying: When he was risen from the dead*. It seems, they did not at this time fully understand Christ's meaning, for they were as yet but babes in knowledge; but they laid up the saying in their hearts, and afterwards it became both intelligible and useful. Note, It is good to *hear for the time to come*, ^{<223>}Isaiah 42:23. The juniors in years and profession should treasure up those truths of which at present they do not well understand either the meaning or the use, for they will be serviceable to them hereafter, when they come to greater proficiency. It was said of the scholars of Pythagoras that his precepts seemed to freeze in

them till they were forty years old, and then they began to thaw; so this saying of Christ revived in the memories of his disciples *when he was risen from the dead*; and why the? *First*, Because *then* the Spirit was poured out to bring things to their remembrance which Christ had said to them, and to make them both *easy* and *ready* to them, ^{<414>}John 14:26. That very day that Christ rose from the dead he *opened their understandings*, ^{<424>}Luke 24:45. *Secondly*, Because then this saying of Christ was fulfilled. When the temple of his body had been *destroyed* and was *raised again*, and that upon the *third day*, then they remembered this among other words which Christ had said to this purport. Note, It contributes much to the understanding of the scripture to observe the fulfilling of the scripture. The event will expound the prophecy.

[2.] What use they made of it: *They believed the scripture, and the word that Jesus had said*; their belief of these was confirmed and received fresh support and vigour. They were slow of heart to believe (^{<425>}Luke 24:25), but they were *sure*. The *scripture* and the *word of Christ* are here put together. not because they concur and exactly agree together, but because they mutually illustrate and strengthen each other. When the disciples saw both what they had read in the Old Testament, and what they had heard from Christ's own mouth, fulfilled in his death and resurrection, they were the more confirmed in their belief of both.

^{<412>}JOHN 2:23-25

THE SUCCESS OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY

We have here an account of the success, the poor success, of Christ's preaching and miracles at Jerusalem, while he kept the passover there. Observe,

I. That our Lord Jesus, when he was at Jerusalem at the passover, did preach and work miracles. People's *believing on him* implied that he preached; and it is expressly said, *They saw the miracles he did*. He was now in Jerusalem, the holy city, whence the *word of the Lord* was to go *froth*. His residence was mostly in Galilee, and therefore when he was in *Jerusalem* he was very busy. The time was holy time, *the feast-day*, time appointed for the service of God; at the passover the *Levites taught the good knowledge of the Lord* (^{<442>}2 Chronicles 30:22), and Christ took that

opportunity of preaching, when the concourse of people was great, and thus he would own and honour the divine institution of the passover.

II. That hereby many were brought to *believe in his name*, to acknowledge him a *teacher come from God*, as Nicodemus did (~~BRD~~ John 3:2), a great prophet; and, probably, some of those who *looked for redemption in Jerusalem* believed him to be the Messiah promised, so ready were they to welcome the first appearance of that *bright and morning star*.

III. That yet *Jesus did not commit himself unto them* (v. 24): *ouk episteuen heauton autois* — *He did not trust himself with them*. It is the same word that is used for *believing* in him. So that to believe in Christ is to *commit ourselves* to him and to his guidance. Christ did not see cause to repose any confidence in these new converts at Jerusalem, where he had many enemies that sought to destroy him, either,

1. Because they were *false*, at least some of them, and would betray him if they had an opportunity, or were strongly tempted to do so. He had more disciples that he could trust among the Galileans than among the dwellers at Jerusalem. In dangerous times and places, it is wisdom to take heed in whom you confide; *memneso apistein* — *learn to distrust*. Or,

2. Because they were *weak*, and I would hope that this was the worst of it; not that they were *treacherous* and designed him a mischief, but,

(1.) They were *timorous*, and wanted zeal and courage, and might perhaps be frightened to do a wrong thing. In times of difficulty and danger, cowards are not fit to be trusted. Or,

(2.) They were *tumultuous*, and wanted discretion and management. These in Jerusalem perhaps had their expectations of the *temporal* reign of the Messiah more raised than others, and, in that expectation, would be ready to give some bold strokes at the government if Christ would have *committed himself to them* and put himself at the head of them; but he would not, for his kingdom is not of this world. We should be shy of turbulent unquiet people, as our Master here was, though they profess to *believe in Christ*, as these did.

IV. That the reason why he did not *commit himself* to them was because he *knew* them (v. 25), knew the wickedness of some and the weakness of others. The evangelist takes this occasion to assert Christ's omniscience.

1. He *knew all men*, not only their names and faces, as it is possible for us to know many, but their nature, dispositions, affections, designs, as we do not know *any man*, scarcely *ourselves*. He knows *all men*, for his powerful hand made them all, his piercing eye sees them all, sees into them. He knows his *subtle enemies*, and all their secret projects; his *false friends*, and their true characters; what they really are, whatever they pretend to be. He knows them that are truly his, knows their integrity, and knows their infirmity too. He *knows their frame*.

2. He *needed not that any should testify of man*. His knowledge was not by information from others, but by his own infallible intuition. It is the infelicity of earthly princes that they must see with other men's eyes, and hear with other men's ears, and take things as they are represented to them; but Christ goes purely upon his own knowledge. Angels are his messengers, but not his spies, for *his own eyes run to and fro through the earth*, ^{<440>}2 Chronicles 16:9. This may comfort us in reference to Satan's accusations, that Christ will not take men's characters from him.

3. He *knew what was in man*; in particular persons, in the nature and race of man. We know what is done *by men*; Christ knows what is *in them*, *tries the heart and the reins*. This is the prerogative of that essential eternal Word, ^{<341>}Hebrews 4:12, 13. We invade his prerogative if we presume to judge men's hearts. How fit is Christ to be the *Saviour of men*, very fit to be the physician, who has such a perfect knowledge of the patient's state and case, temper and distemper; knows what is in him! How fit also to be the *Judge of all!* For the judgment of him who knows *all men*, all in men, must needs be *according to truth*.

Now this is all the success of Christ's preaching and miracles at Jerusalem, in this journey. The Lord comes to his temple, and none come to him but a parcel of weak simple people, that he can neither have *credit* from nor put *confidence* in; yet he shall at length *see of the travail of his soul*.