

American Union

Newsletter

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THE KINGDOM OF ME

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There once was a certain king who had three wives. One day he called for them, one by one, to ask, "When your king dies, will you still be true to him?" The last wife, Alieía, who was always the first in his attentions and upon whom he had lavished much, replied, "In that very hour, I will forget him and marry another. I cannot stand to be alone." Then the sec-

ond wife, Sýntrofas, who was his most needed companion and friend, said as she tried to hide her tears, "I promise to remember and accompany him to his tomb, but not much longer thereafter." Then the first wife, Charaktíras, confessed, "I'll be true to him as long as there is heaven and earth and trees."

The last and first-mentioned wife, Alieía, was his possessions. The second wife, Sýntrofas, was his family and associates. And then his first wife, Charaktíras, was his character. The thing most important, and too often the most neglected and regretted in the end, is character. Character is the one and only thing that transcends a person's lifetime and is rewarded in eternity.

The purpose of the above parable is not to answer the question about what happens when one dies, but rather to ask the question about life, "Why are you here?" Beyond all argument, at the end of all questions, one figure stands above all others, so the question is, Who was or is Jesus Christ? Whether you think He is true or mostly fable, His story and sayings eclipse all others of all time, challenging the intelligent while comforting

the simple. One of His lesser repeated and yet most profound truths is, "The kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:21. These words contain a worldview that is truly valuable.

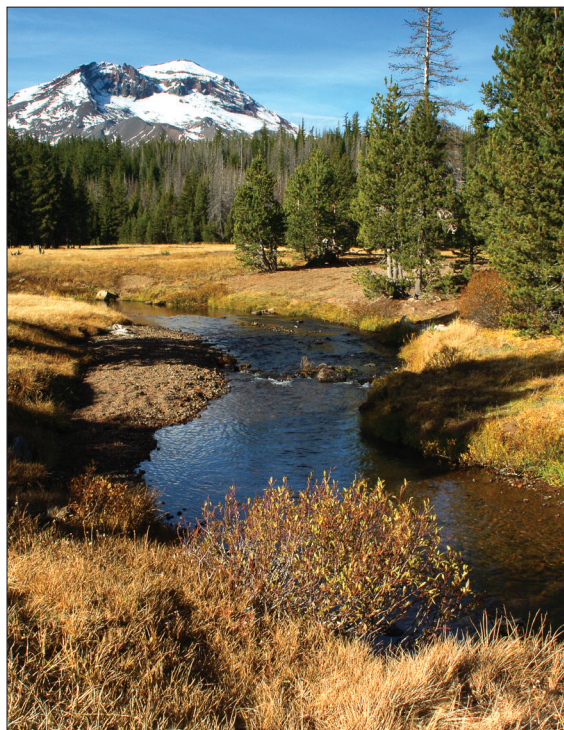


The kingdom of me—how can that be?

Kingdoms are made up of four things: (1) a king or ruler, (2) a capital or seat of government with laws of governance, (3) subjects who accept and honor the king and his laws, and (4) a prescribed territory that is under his jurisdiction and protection.

To know what constitutes the kingdom of heaven, it helps for each of us to know what constitutes his or her own personal kingdom—the kingdom of me. Who or what is the king? What is the capital? Who or what are the subjects? And what is the territory?

The king of your kingdom is the deciding power within in you—your will. The capital city is your higher, conscious mind with its abilities—reason, intel-





lect, knowledge, experience, and intuition. The subjects are your appetites, desires, feelings, and passions. The territory is your body with its five portals, or doors, also known as the five senses—sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch.

The king with three wives is a metaphor of one's own kingdom. The will is the deciding power; and when it makes a decision with correct information, moral rectitude, and reason, it operates as a kind of republic, with checks and balances. But when the subjects rule, the kingdom at its best is a democracy, which always morphs into a dictatorship, where he who rules is right and the survival of the fittest is the religion of the land.

So, each of us is a kingdom. But the kind of kingdom that we have will be determined by the use we make of the will. In and of itself, the will is finite. Will power is consumable and quite limited unless it is yielded to God. Under tests, problems, and emotional pressure, the will is easily and quickly depleted.

When Jesus said that the kingdom is within you, He was challenging each person to think about who is in charge of his or her kingdom. Jesus wants to be, but the person must let Him in. Then the "will" is infinite. "With man this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26.

Does Jesus have three wives?

Strange as it may seem, the Bible speaks of Jesus as being married to three things—the land (Isaiah 62:4), the church (Ephesians 5:26; 1 Corinthians 11:2), and the New Jerusalem. Revelation 22:2. These are all mentioned

in the Scriptures, but in reverse order. Jesus came to save and reclaim that which was lost, and He is doing that for all who are willing to make Him the King of their lives. When one yields to Him (believes), his will is joined to Jesus' will. This is called conversion, life, adoption, reconciliation, peace, freedom, forgiveness, pardon, justification, and eternal salvation.

You have come to a certain point in your understanding, but have your eyes been opened? Do you see "men as trees, walking" (Mark 8:24), or do you see the forest? Your little kingdom is a miniature of that great kingdom that Jesus is preparing and inviting you to join. He returned to heaven to receive a kingdom. Luke 19:12 is clear. He said therefore, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." The signs of the times reveal that He will return shortly for His subjects who have declared Him their King and joined themselves to His great cause. Before He comes, He will have determined who are His own; He will have divided the sheep from the goats. "Therefore be ye also ready;..." Matthew 24:44. Yes, it may be very soon!

A new thing

"Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43:19.

"Christ has opened a fountain for the sinful, suffering world, and the voice of divine mercy is heard: 'Come, all ye thirsting souls; come and drink.' You may take of the water of life freely. Let him that heareth say, Come; and who-

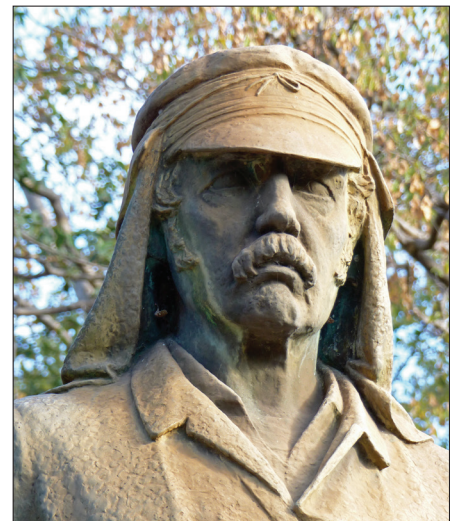
soever will, let him come. Let every soul, women as well as men, sound this message. Then the work will be carried to the waste places of the earth. The scripture will be fulfilled: In that day the Lord shall open fountains in the valleys, and 'rivers in the desert,' and 'with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.' Isaiah 41:18; 43:19-20; 12:3." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 86.

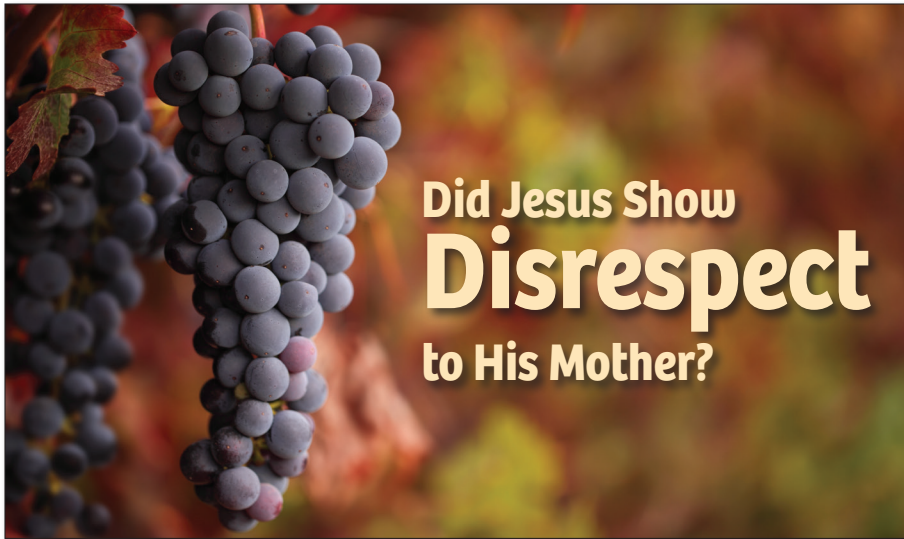
With these words, God promises to do something new and unexpected, creating paths and provisions where none seem possible, urging His people to look forward rather than dwell on past deliverances, as He will bring refreshing life (streams) through hardship (wilderness) to guide them out of exile and spiritual barrenness. It is a message of hope, transformation, and divine power to provide solutions in impossible situations, even creating spiritual refreshment (the Holy Spirit, living water).

Not a true story, but it makes a point

Dr. David Livingstone received a request sent via a native from a South African mission telling him that there were some missionaries there who wanted to work with him if he could please advise them a good road by which they might be able to come to him. To this he replied, "If they need a good road, I don't need them!"

What was Livingstone known for saying? "God, send me anywhere, only go with me. Lay any burden on me, only sustain me. And sever any tie in my heart except the tie that binds my heart to Yours."





Did Jesus Show Disrespect to His Mother?

2. Did He show disrespect to His mother?
3. Was this the first time that Jesus called His mother “woman”?
4. Was it true that Jesus’ time had not yet come?
5. Did He not know that the wine was going to run out at the wedding and that He would need to make wine from water?

Let us look for answers to these questions.

First, if Jesus had insulted His mother in His divine state, then this state would have been disturbing for Mary and for everybody else. That would have meant that Jesus’ mother was a mother when Jesus was in His human state, but a woman when He was in His divine state. Then, Mary would have also been surprised that she had been a mother for thirty years, while on that day, in the midst of a wedding celebration, she became just a woman. The Word became flesh and was born of Mary; He was both Man and God at the same time, having both a human nature and a divine nature. It was true that she was not the mother of the Word, but she was certainly Jesus’ physical mother. Therefore, even in His divine state, nothing would justify His insulting His mother in any way.

Second, if Jesus’ words were an insult when He called her “woman,” Mary would have been offended; but she was not. Reading the translation of Jesus’ response, we might think that He insulted her and so would not help. But notice what she did when she heard His response, for Mary understood that she was being honored and that Jesus would help. She told the servants to do as He said, and almost immediately Jesus gave them specific instructions. Otherwise, Jesus would have said that His time to perform a miracle had not yet come, and therefore He would do nothing. But that was not the case! The wine was available in a matter of minutes. If Jesus would have refused, no wine would have been produced.

Furthermore, when Mary was asked for help at the very first, even she did not refuse in any way. She could have said something like, “He is very new in His ministry,” or “It would be difficult right now.” But she did not even say, “I’ll ask Jesus first if He can somehow assist in the matter.” Thus, she had no

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(Workshop presented on Thursday, January 1, 2026, at the American Union Conference)

“Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.” John 2:4.

As I read this verse over and over again, some questions arose in my mind, and I found satisfying answers. At first glance, this verse seems complicated and negative. However, it is actually very positive and joyful, for the context provides evidence that the two phrases in the verse have a gentle, pleasant meaning.

First, let us look at the background of the verse. Wine had an important part in all of Jewish religion, culture, and social life. That is why Jesus Christ turned water into wine and served wine at the last supper, presenting it as a symbol of His precious blood. In the above verse, wine was the center point of Jesus’ first miracle.

A wedding celebration was held in the small town of Cana of Galilee. Since the host was a close relative of Mary, Jesus’ virgin mother, and Joseph, he had invited Mary, Jesus, and His disciples to attend. The disciples were invited in honor of Jesus, and it was a great honor for the host (the bridegroom) to have Jesus at the celebration. In this situation, the wedding guests were certainly happy to see Jesus, who had just been proclaimed as a great prophet among them.

When the celebration was in full swing, the host was suddenly upset to hear that the wine had run out. This was both an insult to him and a sign of

disrespect to his guests. He must have tried desperately to purchase more wine without anyone being aware of it so as to avoid embarrassment; but he was unable to do so. In this desperate situation, Jesus was their only hope.

Since Mary was close to the host, she asked Jesus to help. When she told Him that there was no more wine, it showed that she was well aware of Jesus’ divine power and could provide the wine, not that He was an expert winemaker. Most of the people knew Him as the carpenter’s son, and a carpenter was not expected to make wine. Jesus answered her, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.”

Viewed superficially, these words might seem to imply that Jesus was disrespectful of His mother in calling her “woman,” and was not ready to help the host before His appointed time. Three points arise. First, why did Jesus address His mother as “woman”? Second, why did He say, “What have I to do with thee?” And, third, why did He say, “Mine hour is not yet come”?

What can be seen in these points? When non-Christians read these words, they criticize what they see as aggression on Jesus’ part and question what kind of a prophet He was if He did not even understand basic manners, courtesy, and ethics. And when a Christian reads them, he may try to explain that Jesus was God and therefore called His mother “woman.” That raises additional questions.

1. Was Jesus correct in calling His mother “woman,” because He was divine?

doubt that Jesus would help. That is why she assured the host that there was no problem, otherwise she could have refused to speak to Jesus about it. But Mary confidently asked Jesus to help the host. When she told Him that there was no wine, the implication was that Jesus would help them. This shows that in no way did Jesus insult His mother at all, not even unintentionally.

If Jesus had been disrespectful of His mother, He could not be our perfect example and role model. And if He had insulted her unintentionally, He could not be God if inappropriate words suddenly came out of His mouth. He neither knowingly nor unknowingly insulted her. He was fully aware of everything that He said and did. The Jewish culture of that day addressed every female as "woman," meaning respectable lady, or madam. He did not speak harshly to anyone. He addressed all woman with the utmost respect and kindness. This was seen even when He talked to the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28), a sick woman (Luke 13:10-15), the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7-26), Mary Magdalene (John 20:13), and even the woman caught in adultery (John 8:5), in line with the culture.

That is, Jesus always respected His mother and all of the women as He was—Man and God. There was no way He could disrespect His mother, for He was the One who gave the fifth commandment, He was the greatest Teacher, He was the greatest Rabbi, and He was the greatest Teacher of appropriate decency, manners, morality, politeness, and modesty. He was the greatest, most complete example and role model for all people forever.

Addressing the third question, if this was the first time that He called Mary "woman," and if it was objectionable, Mary would have been offended; but she was not. If there had been a sudden insult, Jesus would not have addressed her as such a second time; but Mary did not object then either. That was when He was on the cross; He called her "woman" publicly, saying, "Woman, behold thy son!" John 19:26. Jesus was suffering unfathomably and He was about to die, but He did not forget to care for His mother. He was the perfect, practical example, fulfilling the fifth commandment and explaining it with action.

Jesus called His mother "Woman," which represented a highly respected lady and showed the greatest intimacy, closeness, love, and belonging. It was the manner of the everyday Jewish language and culture to address a female member of society as "woman."

A modern example of this is in the Sindhi culture of Pakistan's Sindh province, where men call their daughters, sisters, mothers, wives, and elderly women *Adhi*, meaning female; and they speak the word very tenderly.

Changing the tone of one's voice actually changes the meaning of the word, and Jesus must have been very gentle with His mother. He addressed all the women with gentleness.

In the case of idioms, when they are not fully understood and are then translated literally, the meaning may be lost. Think of a teacher who made some boys stand outside the classroom as punishment for not doing their schoolwork. All of a sudden, an inspector walks by with the headmaster, and the inspector asks the man why these boys are standing outside the classroom. A translation of that might be that the headmaster replies that they are outstanding boys.

So, it is possible that Jesus' answer contained an idiom that was not understood when the translation was done.

When Jesus' mother told Him, "They have no wine," she might have offered her help with a gesture of cooperation (as when Jesus fed five thousand people and a boy gave five loaves and two fish). Jesus replied, "Woman [very honorable lady], I do not need your help [I need nothing from you, so you can be at ease]; although it is not My turn to contribute, I can still help." Then Mary told the servants, "Do whatever He tells you to do."

In the next moment, He made the best wine from water—and not only the best wine, but abundant wine. That clearly means that Jesus neither answered in the negative nor uttered any words of disrespect.

As for Jesus' time, mentioned in question 4 above, there are additional points.

1. If the time that Jesus referred to in this verse were understood to mean the time for performing miracles, then the miracles began as soon as Jesus was conceived! He

became flesh miraculously; this was the greatest miracle. When Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, John the Baptist jumped in her womb, a sign of his worship of Jesus, as if he were saying, "Lord, I am not worthy to untie Your sandals, and yet You have visited my home."

2. At the time of His baptism, the heavens opened, and a voice from heaven spoke to Him, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17.
3. He fasted for forty days and nights, being tempted by Satan and being victorious. In addition, the disciples were convinced of His Messiahship by seeing His miracles.
4. In fact, according to Jewish custom, every family contributed to the wedding expenses, such as the host providing food on the first day, a relative providing the food on the second day, and another relative providing the food on the third day. So, Jesus said, in the context of that custom, that it was not yet His turn to contribute. But when He blessed the host by making the wine, it is easy to understand that Jesus was saying that, even though it was not yet His turn to contribute, He would still help, and He immediately made the wine.
5. Therefore, Jesus was not talking about His time to perform miracles. He knew ahead of time that the wine would run out at the wedding feast and He would perform the miracle of turning water into wine, for if Jesus did not know, He would not be God.

Now, keeping the above circumstances and explanations in mind, read the verse again, and you will see that even if Jesus had not given this answer, He would have made the wine, because He knew that a miracle of making wine would take place on this occasion. Therefore, His response to His mother was a direct expression of politeness and humility. God bless you all!

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