



The Wedding Feast at Cana

Description

The Wedding Feast at Cana (1563), by the Italian artist Paolo Veronese is about the biblical story of the Marriage at Cana. It depicts Mary, her son Jesus and some of his apostles attending a wedding in Cana, a city in Galilee. In the course of the wedding banquet, the supply of wine becomes depleted. At Mary's request, Jesus commands the house servants to fill stone jugs with water, which he then transforms into wine.

Commissioned by Benedictine monks In 1562, the Benedictine monks commissioned Paolo Veronese to realise this elaborate and exquisite piece of work as a monumental painting (almost 10m wide) to occupy the back wall of the monastery's refectory, at the Basilica di San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice. Presently though this painting is housed in the Louvre museum in France.



Basilica di San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice where the painting was originally housed in 1562

The Coveted Guests The banquet scene is set within a Greek and Roman architecture from the Renaissance period. The wedding guests are historical personages – a quintessential *crème de la crème* of Veronese's contemporary era including monarchs, nobles, statesmen, queens, emperors, even an Ottoman sultan, poets, diplomats and architects etc – all in exquisite attires in

tune with the fashion of those times.

Paolo places himself in the frame Supposedly the painter of the picture included himself too in the banquet scene, as the musician in white tunic along with some of his contemporary painters and even a composer, seen in the scene as playing different musical instruments in what appears to be a band like setting. Jesus sits at the table just behind them.



Paolo, the creator of the painting is also seen in the frame (in white tunic) along with other artists playing musical instruments as a band

Wine created in a stone pitcher Bottom right quarter of the frame depicts a wine servant pouring the new red wine into a serving jar from a large and ornate stone pitcher which earlier had been filled with water (supposedly at the instructions by Jesus to convert it into wine). Behind the wine servant stands the poet Pietro Aretino intently and curiously examining the wine in his glass. In fact not only him but many guests are seen to be curious about this newly created red wine.



Poet Pietro Aretino examining the newly created red wine

Curiosity about the new red wine Bottom left part of the painting shows the steward of the house (dressed in green) supervising the black servant boy proffering a glass of the new red wine to the bridegroom. At the edge of the nuptial table, a dwarf holds a bright-green parrot, and awaits instructions from the house steward.

All this while the guests (which includes the ottoman emperor seen in the golden tunic) await curiously for the new dessert-course wine service. A woman also seen urging her husband to ask the bride about the new red wine they have been served (newly created miracle wine)



Guests look towards the bridegroom curious about the newly created wine being served

Guests and hosts interchange seats In the painting, the holy guests and the mortal hosts have exchanged their social status, and so Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and some of his Apostles, are seated in the place of honour of the centre-span of the table, while the bride and bridegroom sit, as guests, at the far end of the table's right wing.

Hourglass and futility of human vanity Above the Jesus figure, a carver is carving a lamb, beneath the Jesus figure, musicians play lively music, yet, before them is an hourglass and a reference to the futility of human vanity.

The lamb of God Above the figure of Jesus, a serving maid awaits for the carver to carve an animal to portions. The alignment of the Jesus figure under the carver's blade and block, and the butchered animals, prefigure his sacrifice as the [Lamb of God](#) and one who takes away the sin of the world.



Lamb of God Symbolism