

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

“The First Sign”

John 2:1-12

Open your Bibles to John Chapter 2. We are going to look at the first 12 verses. Let's read our text and then we'll get into the study. Beginning at verse 1 John writes:

¹On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. ³And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.”

⁴Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.”

⁵His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do *it*.”

⁶Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. ⁷Jesus said to them, “Fill the waterpots with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸And He said to them, “Draw *some* out now, and take *it* to the master of the feast.” And they took *it*. ⁹When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. ¹⁰And he said to him, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the *guests* have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!”

¹¹This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

¹²After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

It is important to remember why John wrote his Gospel. After all, there were already three accounts of the life of Jesus circulating at that time. But the synoptic Gospels, as the others are called, tell us all about what Jesus taught and did. But John wrote his Gospel so that YOU might believe. So he focuses more on WHO Jesus is.

The other writers show us Jesus outwardly. John shows us Jesus inwardly.

And the others emphasize Jesus' humanity. John emphasizes His divinity.

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Even their audiences were different:

Matthew portrays Christ as the Prophesied King sent to the Jews.

Mark shows us the Obedient Servant and was written with the Romans in mind.

Luke pictures Jesus as the Perfect Man and was written to the Greeks.

But John gives us Jesus, the Son of God, and he wrote to all who would believe. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And all who trust in Him will have eternal life in His name.

So what we have in John's Gospel is a collection of evidences concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. These "**signs**," as John calls them, prove both His deity and humanity. The whole purpose of this Gospel is to line up supporting proofs for the fact that Jesus was God come in the flesh (John 1:14). And the first of the signs is found in our text at this time.

The setting is a wedding in a place called Cana in the Galilee region of Israel. Look what John writes as we begin our study (verse 1):

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

Is there any significance to this being the "**third day**?"

Some say there is a strong connection to the creation account in Genesis. They see a parallel between the six days of creation and the first six days of Jesus' ministry. They say that Jesus, the One through whom all things were created, is beginning His creative activity in human history. And that is possible.

I think it is just mentioned because it was the third day from when Nathanael met Jesus. Or you could say, "*two days later*." I do wonder if it was during this time that Jesus called James, John, Peter and Andrew to follow Him though. We shall see that they are with Him at the wedding.

There have been arguments over the years as to where exactly Cana was. I (along with others) believe it was near Nazareth (within nine miles). And that answers some important questions about what happens at this festive occasion.

The first of these questions is why was the mother of Jesus there?

By the way, that is what John always calls her (and maybe we will see why later in the study). I think it is because she was from Nazareth and she knew the people that got married. Nazareth was a small agricultural town and Cana was not too far away — think Towanda and Rome.

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We can guess that Jesus' brothers (and sisters) were there as well. Yes, Jesus had brothers and sisters. Take a look at Matthew 13 and Mark 6. Both of those Gospels say that Jesus had four brothers and at least two sisters. But there is someone missing from the family of Jesus. There is no mention of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Most believe that by this time he had passed away. And this will help us in our understanding of what happens as well. So the mother of Jesus was there and so were Jesus and his new disciples. Look at verse 2:

Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.

This is the first of many stories suggesting that Jesus was not just your average *holy man*. Our Lord was always welcome among the regular folks. He was not like the Pharisees who looked down on a lot of people. In fact, I think Jesus was just one of us. Remember, He did not go to the Temple to find His disciples. He went to the streets.

Jesus didn't spoil the good time; and in the Jewish culture of that time, a wedding was the best party of all. And here is a little advice to any of you who are either getting married one day or maybe planning a wedding: Make sure that Jesus is invited to the event. In fact, I recommend that you place Him at the center of it.

One of the best evangelistic messages I have ever heard was given on the day Julia and I were married by Pastor Tom Luitwieler at Calvary Chapel Reno/Sparks. And we never would have made it these past 25 years had not the Lord been at the center of our marriage. I love what Charles Spurgeon had to say about the presence of Jesus at weddings. He wrote:

Jesus comes to a marriage, and gives His blessing there, that we may know that our family life is under His care.

So the gang is all there at the wedding having a good time. But trouble was brewing, or fermenting, if you will (slight pun intended). Look what happens next (verse 3):

And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."

This was a disaster. It could shame the couple for a long time. This was not like the weddings we have in our time. There were actually three stages to a Jewish wedding:

- 1) First was the betrothal, which took place at least nine months to a year before the actual ceremony.
- 2) Second was the procession.
- 3) And third was the wedding feast.

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Once the betrothal began, the groom would go to his father's house and prepare a place for him and his wife to live. By the way, once you entered this stage, the marriage was legally binding. This tells us that one should not "*play marriage*," if you know what I mean. We will study this in more depth when we get to John Chapter 14. (Our Groom has been preparing a place for us to live with Him for 2,000 years!) When the prep work was done, the father would send the son to collect his bride and bring her home. Then they would consummate the marriage.

And not only was the groom's family responsible for the house the couple would live in. They were also in charge of the wedding feast, which could last up to seven days. So think about this:

What would running out of something during the feast say about the groom's ability to take care of the bride?

You have to wonder then why Mary was so concerned about this evident social embarrassment.

Was she involved in the planning?

Was the groom one of her relatives?

We don't know for sure. But what we do know is that she goes to the person in the world who she trusts the most — Jesus. Jesus was the oldest of her children and would have become the head of the household had Joseph passed away.

And, of course, Jesus was also Jesus. He never made a bad decision, and He always did the right thing. So, of course, when trouble comes, she looks to her son. But there is a problem here. Jesus is no longer just her son. He is now her Savior. So look how He responds (verse 4):

Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."

Much has been written about Jesus Calling Mary "**woman**" here.

Was He being rude?

No, that would be a sin.

I think there are a couple of different reasons He does this. First, it was a term of endearment. Jesus will call Mary Magdalene "**woman**" in John Chapter 20 when she first sees the risen Lord. Then, because she doesn't know who He was, He calls her by her name. So, it was a term of respect. In fact, from the cross, Jesus says this to John and Mary (John 19:25-27):

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²⁵Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" ²⁷Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own *home*.

But I think there was another reason Jesus spoke to her in this manner. There now had to be a new relationship between Him and His mother. He actually gave her an indication of this earlier in His life. You are familiar with the story in Luke Chapter 2.

The family of Jesus heads to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. But on the way home, Mary and Joseph notice that Jesus is nowhere to be found. So they head back to the city to find Him, which they did. He was in the midst of a group of teachers in the Temple — taking them to school. When they question Jesus about this action, this was His response (Luke 2:49-50):

⁴⁹And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

But then we learn this (verses 51-52):

⁵¹Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. ⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Jesus remained subject to Mary His whole life, maybe until this very moment. But now His ministry has begun, and He must be about His Father's business. So now she is no longer His mother. She needs to be born again and become His disciple, just like you and me.

So Jesus is telling her that if He does do something about the lack of wine, it won't be just because she asked. It will be because His hour had come. We will revisit that phrase many times in the Gospel of John.

Every moment of His life, Jesus did the will of the Father. And He did it exactly as He was supposed to and right on time. I think Mary finally, at this moment, figured this out. This is important to understand because some branches of Christianity (Catholics) venerate Mary (as do the Muslims).

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Mary is not the mother of God. She was the human agent through whom the Son of God took on a human body and then entered the world. She is also a sinner who needed the grace of God to be saved. And, like the disciples, she needs to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. That is what she is doing. Look what she says to the servants (verse 5):

His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”

These are the last words of Mary in the Bible.

And you would think that they would end the argument about her having clout with Jesus as the Catholics teach. She didn't say, “*Come to me and I will take your petitions to Jesus.*” That is a false idea. I think if Mary appeared today (and she doesn't, no matter what those who believe in apparitions say), she would say the same thing. The last thing she would want us to do is worship or serve her. And I think it would be an embarrassment for her to know that people pray to her. She would tell us to obey Jesus — to serve Him alone. Enough about Mary.

Next we have the first of the eight “**signs**” I spoke of earlier in the study. Jesus is now going to be about the Father's business. Look at verses 6-7:

⁶Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. ⁷Jesus said to them, “Fill the waterpots with water.” And they filled them up to the brim.

What does John say these waterpots were for?

Purification of the Jews.

These were the containers that housed the water for the Jews' ritual washings. They weren't for hygiene per se. The water was not used to wash the feet of the guests. These pots were for “**purification laws**” that were added to God's Law and passed on orally from generation to generation.

Can you imagine what these people would think about drinking from them?

Remember when the Pharisees freaked because the disciples of Jesus didn't wash their hands before they partook of grain?

That is what we are talking about here. These waterpots were monuments to ritual religion. But Jesus is going to fill them with some new wine.

Something new is beginning right there at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. And notice something important. He doesn't allow for any doubt that what He is going to do will be

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miraculous. He has them fill the pots to the brim. He wasn't going to just add something to the water. He was going to transform it. But don't miss this: He uses human servants to fill them. He could easily have just created the liquid in the pots. However, He wanted them to share in the blessing (and maybe come to Him???). Once again I am going to quote from Charles Spurgeon to get some application. He wrote:

When you are bidden to believe in Him, believe in Him up to the brim. When you are told to love Him, love Him up to the brim. When you are commanded to serve Him, serve Him up to the brim."

Next we have the actual miracle, or "**sign**," as John calls it. Look at verse 8:

And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it.

This took faith on behalf of the servants, don't you think?

They knew what the water was for, i.e., washing. Imagine how angry the master of the feast would be if they took him water to drink! And *that water*, if you know what I mean. Yet, in faith, they did as Jesus instructed.

Now there is an argument about whether or not this was fermented wine. I think it was because, as we shall see, it was superior to the wine that was previously served. But others believe it was just a good grape juice. And it is true that they had both. In fact, Pastor Joe Focht of Calvary Chapel Philadelphia, who I love listening to, says that he sees no way that Jesus would stumble people and produce something that could cause them to sin.

But this was a party. The Jews typically diluted their wine at least 3-to-1 with water to avoid drunkenness. And, last of all, this was not like many weddings of our time. It was not a drunken bash. It was a seven-day feast. Bottom line, this is not a passage that teaches about whether or not a Christian can or should drink alcohol. It is about a Jewish wedding feast. What I will say is that, if I was at that wedding, I would not partake if it had fermented. If you would, that is between you and God. But here is the important thing. This wasn't just wine. It was the very best wine, new wine, heavenly wine. Look at verse 9:

When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom.

When did the water become wine?

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Whenever Jesus wanted it to. We don't know for sure because everything in this miracle shows no collusion between Jesus and any of the people at the feast. This was not a magician's illusion. It was a sign from Heaven. Jesus didn't say a word or perform a ceremony. He didn't use any hocus pocus. He simply exercised God's will, and the miracle was done. This wasn't so hard for the very One who spoke the heavens and earth into existence.

The servants knew where it came from, but I bet they still cringed just a little as the master raised it to his lips. And here is the main thing about this sign Jesus performed. It was not about the wine. It was about the Wine Maker. He didn't make it so that people would enjoy, although they did. In a moment we will see what He had in mind. For now, just taste and see that the Lord is good. Look at verse 10:

And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the *guests* have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!"

Notice the reaction of the master of the ceremony. He calls the bridegroom to him.

I wonder if this poor guy knew that the wine was running out?

I bet he did. He is probably sweating it out, thinking he is going to get chastised. But Jesus...

Instead of bad news, he gets the good news. Not only is there more wine, but it is better wine. It is the best wine ever made. So the party was back on. But here is the thing:

We don't learn any more about the feast. We don't know who got married. We don't know how long Jesus and His disciples stayed. But we do know this (verse 11):

This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

This was the reason Jesus did the miracle. He did it so that those who saw what He did would believe in Him.

It was the beginning of the "**signs**" that Jesus did in His ministry. That puts us on notice that there will be more of them. In fact, there are seven (some say eight, counting His resurrection) miracles that John identifies as "**signs.**" And they are all given so that we would believe on Jesus.

We need to believe on Him first for salvation. Then we need to believe on Him more and more each day. Think about this:

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Moses' first miracle was to turn water into blood, showing that the Law brings death. But Jesus' first miracle was to turn water into wine. This shows us that there is joy and gladness in this new work that Jesus is going to do. In a real sense this acts out what we read in John 1:17. John wrote:

For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

This miracle was an incredible display of the grace of God. And it did something for His disciples. It revealed to them His glory and gave them a stronger foundation for their faith.

The word that John used for *sign* was not *dunamis*, which indicates power. It is the word *semeion*, which speaks of “*something that points beyond itself to something greater*” (Warren Wiersbe). That something is actually Someone — **Jesus**.

It is not enough, as we shall see, to simply believe in the things that Jesus does. We must believe in Him and the Father who sent Him. That is why with some of these “**signs,**” Jesus includes a sermon to the miracle. And in that sermon He interprets the *sign*. In John 6, Jesus feeds the 5,000. Then He teaches us that He is the Bread of Life. As we need food to sustain us bodily, so we need Him to sustain us spiritually. Here is the bottom line:

Like with the disciples and maybe some of the servants, Jesus did this *sign* so you would believe. And as you behold His glory, you can even believe more. So if this *sign* was for you, then join Jesus' friends as they begin to walk with Him. Look at verse 12:

After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

Up to now we have seen a softer side of Jesus. Next time we are going to see a different side. Read ahead and see just how serious He was about the calling the Father made on His life.

Let's pray.

SING THE REVELATION SONG