

## JOHN CHAPTER 2

### Learning about Jesus<sup>1</sup>

Contrary to some who incorrectly teach that Christ performed miracles when He was a child, John 2:11 clearly states that the turning of the water into wine was the *beginning* of His miracles. The positioning of this sign in the Gospel obviously is of crucial importance because it is not merely intended to be the first (by number) of such miraculous events but also functions as the head, clue, or key to the signs of Jesus (2:11). The one who understands this sign should understand the point of all the signs.<sup>2</sup> Keep in mind that John recorded these *signs* to prove that Jesus is God (John 20:30–31), so that people might believe in Him and be saved.

**I. The Failure of Israel (2:1–12)** <sup>1</sup> *And on the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; <sup>2</sup> and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup> And when the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” <sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come.” <sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” <sup>6</sup> Now there were six stone water jars set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing two or three measures each. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to them, “Fill the water jars with water.” So, they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup> And He said to them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So, they took it to him. <sup>9</sup> Now when the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, <sup>10</sup> and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then the inferior wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.” <sup>11</sup> Jesus did this in Cana of Galilee as the beginning of His signs, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. <sup>12</sup> After this, He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.*

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Alive (John 1-12): Get to Know the Living Savior (The BE Series Commentary)* (p. 35). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Borchert, G. L. (1996). *John 1-11* (Vol. 25A, pp. 152–153). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

This first miracle of Jesus not only demonstrates His divine power, it also pictures how Israel failed as God's chosen people, how sinners are saved, and how believers are to serve Christ. In this regard, this wedding feast is a picture of the nation: the wine had run out, the people's supply was emptied, yet their Messiah stood there to help them. The six waterpots were used for ceremonial cleansing (see Mark 7:3ff), but the Jewish ceremonies could not help the spiritually bankrupt nation. It was without joy (wine is a symbol of joy in the Bible—see Psalm 104:15 and Judges 9:13) and without hope. The people had external ceremonies, but they had nothing to satisfy their hearts.

Christ will one day bring joy again to Israel, when the nation receives Him as King. Israel will be wedded again to God (see Isaiah 54 and Hosea 2), the wine of its joy will run freely, and Christ's glory will be revealed (John 2:11). Until that day comes, Christ must say to Israel, "*What have I to do with thee?*" (John 2:4). The nation has rejected Him, and it will not receive Him until that day when He returns in glory and power.

**II. How a Sinner is Saved:** In his Gospel, John presents seven signs that show how a sinner is saved, as well as the results salvation makes in his life. This first miracle teaches us that salvation is through the Word of God. Note the symbols here.

A. **A thirsty crowd**—This is a picture of the lost world today! They are tasting the world's pleasures but finding no lasting satisfaction. The initial fulfillment they receive eventually runs out. The Bible invites thirsty sinners to come to Christ for salvation and satisfaction (John 4:13–14; 7:37; Isaiah 55:1; Revelation 22:17).

B. **Empty waterpots**—This represents the human heart, which is hard and empty. The Word of God compares the human being to a vessel (2 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Timothy 2:20–21). The sinner's life may look meaningful on the outside, but God sees it as empty and useless until He is able to work a divine miracle.

C. **Filled with water**—In the Bible, water for washing is an image of the Word of God. (See Ephesians 5:26; John 15:3.) All that the servants had to do was fill the empty waterpots with water, which pictures the servant of God filling the heart of the unbeliever with the Word. It is not our job to save souls, but it is our job to give people the Word so that the Holy Spirit can accomplish the miracle of salvation: It is our responsibility to *tell* the "good news"—it is not our responsibility to *sale* the gospel!

**D. *Water to wine***—When the sinner’s heart has been filled with the Word, then the Holy Spirit can perform the miracle of the salvation and bring the joy of new birth. In Acts 8:26–40, Philip *filled* the Ethiopian with the Word, and when the man believed, the miracle of salvation took place. The Ethiopian went his way rejoicing.

Note John 1:17—“*The law came through Moses.*” In the Old Testament, water was changed to blood (Exodus 7:19), which signifies judgment. However, Christ turned water into wine, which speaks of grace and joy. Wine can symbolize the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

**E. *The third day***—This indicates the Resurrection, since Christ arose from the dead on the third day. It was the third day from “*the day following*” (1:43), which was the fourth of the days John wrote about in chapter 1 (Day #1—vv. 19–28; day #2—vv. 29–34; day #3—vv. 35–42; day #4—vv. 43–51). Perhaps John had Genesis 1 in mind when he wrote of this first week of “*a new creation*” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

**F. *The beginning of miracles***—Salvation is the beginning of miracles! After a person is saved, God performs one miracle after another in believers’ lives. These miracles of salvation bring glory to Christ.

**III. *How To Serve Christ***: Mary’s words should be the followed by all who would serve Christ: “*Whatever He says to you, do it*” (2:5). It surely seemed foolish for the servants to fill those waterpots, but God uses the foolish things to confound the mighty (1 Corinthians 1:27). If we are to see men saved, we must obey Christ and publicly declare the Word of God. It is neither entertainment nor recreation that brings people to experience salvation. It is the preaching and teaching of God’s Word. If we do our part, the result is the will and work of the Lord!

The servants knew where the wine came from, but the “*guests*” at the feast did not. When we serve Christ, we become aware of His “*secrets*” (see Amos 3:7.) As believers, we are Christ’s servants and His friends (3:29; 15:15), and He tells us what He is doing. It is better to be a humble servant of Christ and share in His ministry and miracles than to sit at the head table at the greatest feast.

We must use every opportunity to serve Christ, “*in season and out of season.*” Jesus brought glory to God at a wedding feast.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). [\*Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament\*](#) (pp. 214–217). Victor Books.

**II. The Cleansing of the Temple (2:13-25)** <sup>13</sup> *And the Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup> And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; <sup>16</sup> and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me." <sup>18</sup> The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this sanctuary, and will You raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But He was speaking about the sanctuary of His body. <sup>22</sup> So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken. <sup>23</sup> Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, when they saw His signs which He was doing. <sup>24</sup> But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, <sup>25</sup> and because He had no need that anyone bear witness concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man. <sup>4</sup>*

John recorded a cleansing of the temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry whereas the three Synoptics recorded a temple cleansing toward the end of His public ministry (Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–16; Luke 19:45–46). Probably there were two cleansings, since there are differences in the narration of the events. Certainly, John was aware of the Synoptic Gospel accounts, and his Gospel supplemented them. The first cleansing caught the people by surprise. The second cleansing, about three years later, was one of the immediate causes for His death (cf. Mark 11:15–18).

Vs. 2:13–14—As was the custom for the Jewish people (Exodus 12:14–20, 43–49; Deuteronomy 16:1–8), Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover (cf. two other Passover feasts—John 6:4; John 11:55; 12:1; 13:1). The Passover celebration reminded the Jews of God's grace in delivering them from the bondage in Egypt.

The temple (*ἱερόν*, hieron) courts refer to a large courtyard, the Court of the Gentiles, surrounding the temple enclosure. The buying and selling of animals in the area was rationalized as a convenience for the pilgrims who traveled to Jerusalem. But

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<sup>4</sup> [Legacy Standard Bible](#) (Jn 2:13–25). (2022). Three Sixteen Publishing.

abuses developed, and the pilgrim traffic became a major source of income for the city. With money to be made, worship easily became corrupted. Of course, the money changers were another convenience for the pilgrims, since Temple dues had to be paid in the acceptable Tyrian coinage—a high percentage was charged for changing coinage.

Vs. 2:15—Malachi predicted that One would come suddenly to the temple to purify the religion of the nation (Malachi 3:1–3). In His disgust about the situation, Jesus started a small stampede of the sheep and cattle and overturned the tables.

Vs. 2:16—Jesus protested that the authorities had turned His Father’s house into a market. He was not protesting the sacrificial system, but the true purpose for the sacrifices was in danger of being lost.

In the second cleansing of the temple toward the end of His ministry, Jesus’ attack was sharper. At that time, He called the temple area “*a den of robbers*” (Luke 19:46; cf. Jeremiah 7:11) and referred to God as “*My Father.*” Of course, it is only through Jesus that the Father can be known: “*No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him*” (Matthew 11:27).

Vs. 2:17—Jesus’ disciples remembered Psalm 69:9, which says that the Righteous One would pay a price for His commitment to God’s temple. Of course, His zeal for God ultimately led to His death.

Vs. 2:18–19—The Jews—either the Jewish authorities or the merchants—demanded some proof for His right to challenge the existing order (“*Jews demand miraculous signs,*” 1 Corinthians 1:22). But instead of submitting to their demand, Jesus gave a veiled saying, “*Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up.*”

As with His parables in the Synoptics, one purpose of a paradoxical saying was to puzzle the hearers who opposed Him. He desired that His hearers ponder the saying to perceive its significance. “*Destroy this temple (ναός (naos))*” is in the form of a command, but the sense is ironic or conditional. At Jesus’ trial, He was accused of saying He could destroy the temple and raise it again in three days (Matthew 26:60–61). A similar charge was made against Stephen (Acts 6:14).

Vs. 2:20–21—Herod the Great decided to replace the sixth century BC temple of Zerubbabel because it was not of the same glory as that of Solomon’s original temple (see Haggai 2:3). Since work on Herod’s temple began in 20 or 19 BC, 46 years Later would bring the date to AD 27 or 28. The work on the whole temple complex continued until around AD 63. The statement of the Jews meant either that the sanctuary was completed in 46 years or else one phase had been completed. The Jews

asked, “How could He rebuild it in three days? That would be impossible!” The Greek words for “*and You*” are emphatic, suggesting their contempt for Him. Of course, by the *temple*, Jesus meant His body which, after his death, would be resurrected in three days.

Vs. 2:22—Even Jesus’ own disciples did not understand His paradoxical saying at first. It took the light of the Resurrection to illuminate it. They could not see the possibility of His death, so they did not think along these lines until after the event. Of course, they did not understand the Scriptures, which clearly reveal the Messiah’s suffering and death (see Isaiah 52:12–53:12; Luke 24:25–27).

Vs. 2:23—“*While ... in Jerusalem*” during the *Passover*, Jesus did other signs which John did not choose to describe. The effect of these miracles (which were probably healings) was to produce faith on the part of many people. They believed in His name, that is, they trusted in Him. This was not necessarily saving faith, as the next verse implies. They believed Jesus was a great Healer, but not necessarily a great *Savior* from sin.

Vs. 2:24–25—Jesus knew that neither a *temporary excitement* nor a *faith based on signs* was sufficient. In fact, many of the early followers eventually turned back when He did not take up the role of *political* king (cf. John 6:15, 60, 66). Until His death, resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the foundation for faith was not fully laid.

Jesus knew the hearts of His followers—and He knows our hearts! It required the resurrection for genuine faith to be established, even among His disciples. Jesus understood the nature of human frailty and the power of sin in our lives. The Son of God did not need any lessons in the cause or results of human sin. Indeed, human sin was the reason the Son of God came to the world and dying to take away the penalty, power, and presence of sin.

Often our faith is weak and superficial. It is important to realize that Jesus knows our hearts and our commitment. He is neither fooled nor surprised at the lack of faith we can (and do) demonstrate. He did not trust himself to those who professed belief based only on His miracles. He sees beyond the superficial and knows both our character and our hearts (see 1 Samuel 16:7; Psalm 139; Acts 1:24).

John 3 and 4 give illustrations of this truth. He knew Nicodemus’ need, and He told the Samaritan woman about her past (4:29). The connection of chapter 3 to

chapter 2 is evident: “...knew what was in a man” [2:25], and “Now there was a man” [3:1]).<sup>5</sup>

#### QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION<sup>6</sup>

1. When you first came to know Jesus, which of His characteristics had the deepest influence on you?
2. Skim through this chapter. If you were one of Jesus disciples, what would you think of Him? Why?
3. Read John 2:1–12. What does it say about Jesus that He performed His first miracle at a wedding?
4. What impression of Mary does this story give you?
5. Jesus was on a schedule when He was here on earth. Why does that matter to us? What is the significance of the word hour in verse 4?
6. Turning the water into wine was the first of seven signs John recorded in this book. What did this sign point to?
7. Read verses 13–22. Why was Jesus so upset with those selling merchandise in the temple courts?
8. What is “zeal”? How is it different from fanaticism?

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<sup>5</sup> Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 279–280). Victor Books.

<sup>6</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Alive (John 1-12): Get to Know the Living Savior (The BE Series Commentary)* (pp. 47-48). David C Cook. Kindle Edition