

All Signs Point to Jesus

Session 1

March 2, 2025

The Sign of His Glory

The Point: Jesus's work in our lives is for His glory.

Session Passage: John 2:1-11

John 2:1-4

Connection to the Point. At a wedding, Jesus was informed of a problem.

The setting for John 2:1-11. In Scripture, Cana is mentioned only in the Gospel of John. The word Cana means "place of reeds" or "nest." Its exact location, though, is unclear. Archaeologists favor Khirbet Qana as the likely site. It is about eight miles north of Nazareth and overlooks a marshy plain, which may reflect its being a place of reeds. Excavations indicate a population of about twelve hundred. By contrast, other nearby villages had populations that reached only about four hundred. The excavated synagogue indicates Cana had a strong Jewish population. Further, archaeologists excavated stone jars from the site; each held about twenty to thirty gallons.

The purpose of John 2:1-11. The miracle served a dual purpose. First, it introduced the miracles or "signs" John recorded in his Gospel. The final sentence indicated John's Gospel would include others; this was the first sign Jesus performed in Cana. Second, the miracle revealed Jesus's glory and caused His disciples to believe in Him. The implication: If they believed because of this miracle, then by extension, we too should be able to see His glory and believe in Him.

The third day (v. 1). This may have been the third day since Jesus left Judea for Galilee (1:43). Or this may be a foreshadowing of the resurrection on the third day. More likely, though, John was saying the wedding took place on the third day of the week, which had become a Jewish tradition. This was because the third day of creation was unique; twice God declared it to be "good" (Gen. 1:10,12). In a wedding, God was creating a new family; Jews wanted it to be doubly blessed.

A wedding/marriage (v. 1). Jewish weddings in the first century were a week-long celebration or could last even longer. The groom's father paid for the wedding and chose the date. A trumpet (shofar) blast marked the beginning of the wedding. The groom then brought his bride from her father's home to his father's home. This procession was marked by joyous singing and music.

Cana of/ in Galilee (v. 1). OfIn Galilee helped differentiate the site from other locations with similar names. For instance, Kanah was southeast of Tyre and in the territory allocated to Asher (Josh. 19:28). Also, the Brook of Kanah was on the border between the territories of Manasseh and Ephraim (16:8). “OfIn Galilee” would eliminate these as possible sites.

Jesus’s mother/The mother of Jesus (v. 1). Unlike other Gospel writers, John never referred to Mary by name but rather by a title that associated her with Jesus (2:1,3,5,12; 6:42; 19:25,26,27). Not using her name may indicate John expected his readers to know Mary.

Invited/Was called (v. 2). Invitations to Jewish weddings in the first century came in two parts. The first indicated the date; recipients were expected to RSVP. The second invitation arrived when the food was ready and the festivities were about to begin.

They don’t have any wine/They have no more wine/ They have no wine (v. 3). In a culture based on displaying honor and avoiding shame, running out of wine was a huge social blunder. Such a faux pas could ruin the family’s reputation and standing in the community for the rest of their lives. Further, the blunder could result in legal action. The bride’s family could bring charges against the groom’s family for not fulfilling their promises or obligations and for shaming their daughter. Significantly, Mary’s saying They may indicate she was not directly involved in the situation. Some believe she may have been simply a guest at the wedding. This though seems unlikely considering what we see in the next two verses.

What has this concern of yours to do with me/Why do you involve me/What have I to do with thee (v. 4). Jesus’s use of this phrase may indicate Mary had a more official role at the wedding. She may have been a family friend who was merely assisting with the food. Or, she may have been responsible for catering the week-long festivities. If either of these was true, then running out of wine would have been a concern for Mary.

Woman (v. 4). Mary appears in only two scenes in John, here and at the cross. Jesus used the same term to address her as He used when entrusting her to John’s care. Referring to the beloved disciple, Jesus said, “Woman, here is your/behold thy son” (19:26). Despite Jesus using it twice, woman was not a title Jews commonly used when addressing their mothers. Yet it was not a term of disrespect or contempt; it would be comparable to our saying, “Ma’am.”

My/Mine hour (v. 4). Jesus's hour is a theme woven throughout John's Gospel. The term refers to Jesus's being glorified in His death, burial, and resurrection (12:23,27; 17:1). His statement here meant this was not the time for Him to reveal His full glory; that would come later. Yet, as we see in verse 11, this miracle did reveal His glory, meaning His divine power.

John 2:5-8

Connection to the Point. The servants did what Jesus told them to do.

“Do whatever/Whatever . . . do it” (v. 5). This statement to the servants also indicates Mary was more than an observant guest. Do is an imperative, a command. The only way Mary would have had authority to give this directive would have been if she had an official role at the wedding. Otherwise, these servants would have had no compulsion to obey an order from a woman. They would have been answerable only to a member of the groom's family if Mary had no official role.

Mary's statement is a precursor to something Jesus taught His disciples, “You are my friends if you do what I command youYe are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (15:14). The two verses use the same Greek word, translated as “whatsoever.” and “what.” Mary fades from the scene after giving this directive. John was making plain that the focus was not the wedding, the crisis, or even Mary; it was Jesus.

Six stone water jars/waterpots of stone (v. 6). This one phrase tells us so much! First, seven was the Jewish number for perfection. Six, then, represented something imperfect, including the fallenness of humanity. Since the water was for Jewish purification, this miracle focused on how imperfect the old Jewish system of purification and cleansing was for sinful people. Second, the wedding involved a wealthy family. Carved stone jars were much more expensive than clay or ceramic ones. Having six was a display of abundant wealth. Third, this was a large wedding. A small gathering would not need this much water for purification. Fourth, the wedding involved a religiously observant Jewish family—maybe even the family of a priest who served in the Jerusalem temple. The family was obedient to Old Testament law, which stated clay jars were susceptible to contamination. Jews thus used stone jars to avoid uncleanness (Lev. 11:33-34).

Set there for Jewish purification/The kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing/After the manner of the purifying of the Jews (v. 6). John included this detail for the benefit of his non-Jewish readers. They would not have known Jewish purification called for persons to wash their hands before and after eating and the “cups, pitchers,

kettles, and dining couches/cups, pitchers and kettles/cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables” that would have been used at a meal, feast, or religious observance (Mark 7:3-4). Having them there likely meant nearby was the entrance to the dining hall. Water was dipped out of the jars and poured over hands and utensils for ceremonial cleansing. Jews in the first century took purification regulations seriously. Jewish teachings that had been gathered for hundreds of years were finally put into written form known as the Talmud. Although this compilation was recorded after the time of Jesus, its teachings would have been known and practiced in His lifetime. The Talmud has thirty chapters on purifying various vessels and four on cleansing one’s hands.

Twenty or thirty gallons/Two or three firkins (v. 6). That is, about twenty or thirty gallons. This would not have been an excessively large amount for Jewish purification. Giant water vessels known as pithoi dating to about 1500 BC were discovered at the Knossos Palace on the island of Crete. Standing over five feet tall, on average, they each held over 145 gallons.

Fill the jars/waterpots (v. 7). At 20-30 gallons each, the six stone jars at Cana would have held a total of 120–180 gallons. This would not have been too large an amount of water for all the people and utensils that had to be cleaned. The task of filling the jars would not have been a simple one. It would have taken numerous trips to the spring or cistern that supplied the city’s water. Some have ventured that the task would have taken hours rather than a few minutes.

To the brim (v. 7). If the symbolism represented the old system of purification versus the new covenant Jesus was inaugurating, then what Christ was offering would lack nothing. If the new system was an expression of His grace, mercy, and forgiveness, it would be dispensed by the dump truck load rather than thimble-sized measures. Jesus saves to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25).

The headwaiter/Master of the banquet/Governor of the feast (v. 8). In the New Testament, this word appears only in this verse and the next. The Greek translates literally as “ruler of the table.” This may have been a volunteer or someone the groom’s family hired to cater the wedding, or he may have worked for the wedding venue. His role was something of a combination of master of ceremonies, chief steward, and head waiter. He was responsible for overseeing the servants and making sure everyone had plenty of food and drink. As the next verse will show, part of his job was evidently to be the taste-tester for anything served at the wedding.

John 2:9-11

Connection to the Point. Jesus performed a miracle that points to His glory.

After it had become wine/That had been turned into/was made wine (v. 9). This raises the obvious question of when did the water become wine? Did it become wine when it was drawn from the stone jars? As the servants made their way to the headwaiter? Was it when he put the cup to his lips? John did not clarify that detail. This shows that the focus of the story was thus not on the “when” or the “how” but on the “by whom.”

The servants . . . knew (v. 9). Having servants (plural) reinforces two details mentioned above: the groom’s family was wealthy, and this was a large wedding with many guests. The fact the servants knew but the headwaiter and groom did not know echoes a theme we see throughout the Gospels. The Messiah involved the least likely individuals in His kingdom’s work. From shepherds outside of Bethlehem to fishermen, a tax collector, a Samaritan woman at a well, a centurion who declared, “Truly this man/Surely he was the Son of God” (Matt. 27:54), and to a Christian-hating Pharisee named Saul—God revealed the truth to the least-likely in their day. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus still does. He invites the poor, the paralytic, the blind, the beggars, the outcast, the overlooked, the lepers, and those deemed lowlife by society to participate in His kingdom. They become the honored guests, invited to sit at the head table.

You have kept the fine wine until now/You have saved the best till now/Thou hast kept the good wine until now (v. 10). The official’s words indicate three things. First, he was surprised at how good this new wine was. Underscoring the theme of these verses, the quality of this wine exceeded his expectations. Second, the tradition was for the best wine to be served first, to make the biggest impact and impression early in the week-long celebration. The steward thought the groom had done the opposite and saved the better wine until later. Third, he had no idea where this wine had come from. He credited the groom with keeping the better wine until later. He never considered the possibility that this wine had been made available because of a miracle this itinerate preacher from Nazareth had performed.

So, who knew the source of this wine? Jesus did. His disciples knew as evidenced by what we read in verse 11. Mary knew. Finally, the servants knew; they had drawn water and poured it into the stone jars. Who didn’t know? The headwaiter did not know. The groom and his family did not know. None of the guests knew. As far as we know, the wedding festivities continued uninterrupted thanks to the miracle Jesus performed. Why keep the miracle in the shadows and shrouded from public view? Jesus’s hour had not yet come.

The first of His/the signs/ This beginning of miracles (v. 11). The terminology lets us know this was not the only sign/miracle Jesus would perform and more specifically, not the only one in Cana. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) that refer to Jesus's mighty acts as "miracles" (dynamis in Greek), sign was John's preferred word for the miracles Jesus did. A roadside sign may indicate a restaurant is on the next exit, but that sign is not the restaurant. It points beyond itself to something unseen, something greater, more important, and more satisfying than the roadside sign. Jesus's signs/miracles conveyed an unseen truth; they pointed to the fact He was the Word who had become flesh.

He revealed/Manifested forth his glory (v. 11). In the Old Testament, God's glory first dwelled in the tabernacle and later in the temple (Ex. 40:34-35; 2 Chron. 7:1-3). Because of the incarnation, He dwelt among His people in a new way—in human form. Being God in the flesh, Jesus revealed and radiated the Father's glory (John 1:14).

The Hebrew word translated "glory" refers to something heavy, meaning something that matters and is substantial. The Greek word is doxa. Combined with logos, the Greek word for "word," the Doxology is a word that glorifies God.

His disciples believed (v. 11). Near the end of his Gospel, John stated that Jesus did many more signs besides the ones he had included. He explained, "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name/But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name/But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (20:31).

It worked with these first disciples who were with Him at the wedding in Cana; they believed. They put their faith in Him. Two of those with Jesus at the wedding were Andrew and an unnamed disciple; these two had been disciples of John the Baptist. Andrew's brother Peter was at the wedding; so were Philip and Nathaniel (1:35-51). They were no longer disciples of someone else; they were HIS disciples. They had seen the remarkable sign at Cana; even greater signs, though, were yet ahead.