

Water to Wine  
John 2:1-11  
September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ (2:1-2)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ (2:3-5)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ (2:6-10)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ (2:11)

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 2:1-11

1. Can you think of any modern social situations that would cause a similar type of embarrassment or shame as running out of wine at a first century wedding?
2. What is your first impression of Jesus' response to His mother in verse 4?
  - a. If you have several different translations available, read Jesus' response to His mother in the various translations.
  - b. What might account for the sense of distance that He is putting in their relationship? (see also John 5:30)
  - c. How is this similar to Matthew 12:46-50?
  - d. How does His mother demonstrate faith in Him?
3. What is meant by "My hour has not yet come?" Follow the theme of the hour of Christ in the following passages: John 7:30, 8:20, 12:23, 13:1, 17:1
4. Why are people skeptical of miracle stories? How would you respond to someone who says they reject miracle claims because they affirm a scientific understanding of the world? Are those things in conflict?
5. Do you think it is significant that Jesus turned water containers that were set aside for "the Jewish custom of purification" into containers of wine for celebration or is it just one of the details of the story? If so, what might be that significance?
6. Why does John use the word "sign" to describe miracles like this? How do the disciples respond to the sign? How do others respond (2:23-25; 3:1-2; 12:37)? What accounts for the different responses?

Water to Wine  
John 2:1-11  
September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Big idea: Jesus changed water to wine as a sign that pointed to His identity and mission.

## Intro

In chapter 2 we come to the first miracle recorded in John's gospel, unless you count the scene in the last chapter where Jesus knows things about Nathanael that He shouldn't be able to know if He is just a regular guy.

People may start to raise objections. They like Jesus the teacher, Jesus the example, Jesus the sacrifice. But Jesus the miracle worker seems unbelievable because miracles are unbelievable. The description of miracles in the Bible makes some want to put the Bible in the category of fairy tale not reality.

## What is a miracle?

Norm Geisler: A miracle is divine intervention into, or interruption of, the regular course of the world that produces a purposeful but unusual event that would not have occurred otherwise.

Natural laws are not violated. Rather, something supernatural has overcome the natural.

Like a hang-glider and gravity – law of gravity still in effect but the principles of aerodynamics overcame gravity.

It's not that the laws of nature are suspended. They continue to operate but a supernatural force is introduced, negating the effect of the natural law. (Millard Erickson)

Sometimes well-meaning Christians are at fault for skepticism regarding miracles.

Toss around modern "miracle" stories that end up being bogus

Toss around the phrase "it was a miracle!" when really it was just a positive but unlikely outcome (getting a job, avoiding a car crash, etc.).

Better theological term would be providence.

Some reject the possibility of miracles because they are impossible to prove and they believe it will invalidate science.

I understand the concern because they feel like to introduce miracles would be to invalidate all science. If miracles can happen and the natural laws are thrown out the window, why bother with science?

Miracles, even in the Bible, are rare

3 periods – Moses, Elijah/Elisha, Jesus/disciples where they happened with any regularity

Just because miracles can't be verified by science, doesn't mean they can't happen.

When a miracle is recorded in the Bible, we shouldn't look for a natural cause but for an intelligent cause.

Like the faces of four presidents appearing in the solid rock. Shouldn't wonder at the natural cause but should realize that some intelligent, artistic, and skillful people had planned, designed, and built them.

The real question regarding miracles is whether God exists or not.

If He exists, and He is involved in His world, then miracles are at least possible.

John's favorite term for the miracles that he records are "signs."

Why? Because a sign points to something.

“Road closed”

“Merge ahead”

Jesus’s miracles are signs – they point to something about Him.

1. The **setting** (2:1-2)

- a. It’s on the third day – probably third day since the events of chapter 1 where Jesus’ new disciples find, follow, and tell others about Jesus.
  - i. CS Lewis pointed out that details like this in the gospels demonstrate that they understood themselves to be writing historical narrative since ancient fiction did not include realistic details in the same way that modern fiction does.
- b. There was a wedding in Cana of Galilee
  - i. West of the sea of galilee, equidistant between the sea of galilee and the Mediterranean – about 10 miles north of Nazareth – both Cana and Nazareth are in the region of Galilee
  - ii. Short walk from Nazareth so reasonable that the family would know the wedding party
- c. What were weddings like at this time?
  - i. That seems important to understanding what is happening here.
  - ii. They would typically take place over 7 days of celebration and many associates of the bride and groom would stay the whole time, abstaining from work for the celebration.
  - iii. Keener - Greeks had long regarded marriage feasts as a necessary part of a legitimate marriage; such a feast could be used in court to prove that a legal marriage (rather than merely cohabitation) had taken place. ... Jewish people emphasized joyous celebration at wedding feasts, hence music would be important there as in other banquet settings.<sup>55</sup> Bridal processions, like funeral processions, were so important that later rabbis even felt they warranted interruption of scholarship.<sup>57</sup> As one mourned with the bereaved at a funeral, one celebrated with the groom (or bride) at a wedding.
  - iv. They were often large community events. A wealthy person may throw a public banquet for the whole city. The less wealthy would still invite as many as possible.
  - v. It might seem strange to us for a wedding celebration to last 7 days, but is it really that different than how most weddings occur in the US? T
    1. The wedding may be only one day, but the wedding party might arrive several days early to begin decorating, there may be bachelor and bachelorette parties, a rehearsal the day before with a rehearsal dinner to follow (customary that the grooms family pays for the rehearsal dinner). The day of the wedding often includes a meal afterwards (customary that the bride’s family pays). Then the new couple heads away for a honeymoon of a week, while the family finishes cleaning up.
- d. It makes sense that Jesus would be invited. He is from a city only a few miles away, his mother is there, his disciples would be added in. It was understood that disciples would follow their teacher.
- e. The language of the book of common prayer for a wedding ceremony that has been used for 400 years in the church of England includes this line:
  - i. Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord

Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.

2. The **dilemma** (2:3-5)

- a. The wine ran out
  - i. Major societal faux pas – not just embarrassing
  - ii. Culture valued hospitality. Not only could it stigmatize the bride and groom and the groom's family for life, the groom's family could be open to lawsuit by the bride's family for not holding up their end of the bargain.
  - iii. Imagine the sense of panic the wedding party would have felt.
    - 1. ex. Running out of food at a church bbq
  - iv. This is important because all of Jesus' miracles meet specific needs. He wasn't showing off or even just giving signs of His divine nature – He was showing mercy to people.
- b. Wine was part of the celebration.
  - i. No evidence that it would really be grape juice – there was no method to preserve juice and prevent fermentation before modern canning and refrigeration.
  - ii. Keener: At the same time, the alcoholic content of wine was not artificially increased through distillation, and people in the ancient Mediterranean world always mixed water with the wine served with meals, often two to four parts water per every part wine; undiluted wine was considered dangerous.
- c. Jesus' mother states the problem to Jesus with an implied request to do something.
- d. Why does Jesus respond the way He does?
  - i. If you are a teenage boy and your mom says, "The dishwasher needs empty" I do not recommend responding by quoting the words of Jesus, "Woman, what does that have to do with me?"
    - 1. Rude and dismissive in that context. Is it in this context as well?
  - ii. NT expert DA Carson says an exact English equivalent is hard to come by – woman is too distant and possibly too condescending. Dear woman is too sentimental. Lady is not used much except as a formal title or on the lips of a New York cab driver telling a female passenger to hurry up – get in, lady. The expression can be invested with deep love but not often used that way. Southern us "Ma'am" has it almost exactly but children in the south address their mothers with that term and that is precisely how the term does not function on Jesus' lips.
  - iii. Not rude but it is somewhat distant, as is Jesus' question. It distances the two parties and has a slight degree of reproach.
  - iv. Carson again - Jesus declares, at the beginning of his ministry, his utter freedom from any kind of human advice, agenda, or manipulation. He has embarked on his ministry, the purpose of his coming; his only lodestar is his heavenly Father's will.
  - v. Everywhere Mary appears during the course of Jesus' ministry, Jesus is at pains to establish distance between them.
    - 1. Mt 12 when people tell Jesus that his mother and brothers are standing outside to speak to Him, what does He say? Who is My mother and who are my brothers? He waves to his disciples and said, "behold my mother and brothers."
- e. My hour has not yet come.

- i. “my hour has not yet come” implies that his hour will come. What is his hour?
- ii. **John 7:30** So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.
- iii. **John 8:20** These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.
- iv. **John 12:23** And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
- f. Mary persists in faith by telling the servants to do whatever Jesus says to them.
  - i. Carson - in 2:3 she approaches Jesus as his mother, and is reproached; in 2:5, she responds as a believer, and her faith is honored. She still does not know what he would do, but she has committed the matter to him, and trusts him.

### 3. The **miracle** (2:6-10)

- a. The stone waterpots were there for a ritual purification but Jesus turns them into vessels of celebration at a wedding.
- b. How does He do it? When does He do it?
  - i. It's not magic, slight of hand, hidden ingredients. It shows His power, lordship over creation.
- c. Making good wine is an extensive process.
  - i. A couple years ago I traveled with another pastor friend to the Republic of Georgia in eastern Europe. It's actually a major wine producing region. Most families have grape vines at their homes for the purpose of producing their own wine.
  - ii. Need a certain kind of grapes to start with.
  - iii. Complex interaction between soil (color, geology, chemicals), topography, and climate.
  - iv. Must keep the leaves trimmed to let light get to the grapes and keep the clusters small.
  - v. Grapes are collected and squished to make “must”
  - vi. Must is fermented by adding sugar and yeast. Fermentation is a complex process in which as each glucose molecule enters the yeast it goes through a ten-step chemical process that multiplies the yeast and produces CO<sub>2</sub> and ethanol. Takes about 2-4 weeks.
  - vii. Yeast removed and wine is stored for up to several years. The container it is stored in continues to develop and influence the flavor of the wine.
  - viii. Consider that all of this happens instantly. Gives you a good perspective on the miracle.
- d. The headwaiter declares it to be superior, excellent quality.

### 4. The **significance** (2:11)

- a. Three key words in this last verse – sign, glory, believed
- b. As a sign the miracle is a special action which reveals something about Jesus.
- c. He manifested His glory – His nature, power, uniqueness, full of grace and truth
- d. His disciples believed – they had already said in the previous chapter that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God, King of Israel, lamb of God – but we consistently see their categories for Jesus expanded and blown away in the gospels.

- e. “Believe” will continue as a theme we will develop throughout John – appearing more than 100 times.
- f. Not all would believe, even though they saw the signs:
  - i. **John 12:37** But though He had performed so many signs before them, *yet* they were not believing in Him.
- g. What we believe is good, true, and beautiful. This miracle shows that it’s true – Jesus really is unique, He is the Messiah, He is God.
  - i. But what He goes on to teach and the entire biblical ethic and storyline is not only true but good and beautiful.
    - 1. Love your enemies – don’t gun them down.
    - 2. Care for the poor and vulnerable.
    - 3. Show patience and tolerance with people that you struggle with.
    - 4. View other people as image bearers of God with dignity.
    - 5. Forgive as you have been forgiven.
    - 6. Value humility.
- h. The glory of Jesus is not merely His power. He is full of grace and truth.



Norm Geisler: A miracle is divine intervention into, or interruption of, the regular course of the world that produces a purposeful but unusual event that would not have occurred otherwise.

1. The *setting* (2:1-2)

2. The *dilemma* (2:3-5)

**John 7:30** So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because **His hour had not yet come.**

**John 8:20** These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because **His hour had not yet come.**

**John 12:23** And Jesus answered them, saying, "**The hour has come** for the Son of Man to be glorified.

3.The ***miracle*** (2:6-10)



#### 4. The significance (2:11)

**John 12:37** But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.

