

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY, JOHN 2:1-12:50

INTRODUCTION

A. Outline of the *Gospel of John*

1. Prologue (1:1-18)
2. Preparation for Jesus' ministry (1:19-51)
3. Jesus' Ministry (2:1-20:31)
 - a. His public ministry (2:1-12:50)
 - b. His private ministry (13:1-17:26)
 - c. His passion ministry (18:1-20:31)

B. Comments

- Grant Osborne, *We now arrive at the first major section of the Gospel, which narrates Jesus' public ministry (2:1-12:50). This is built around seven signs that are carefully organized to accord with Jesus' discourses. These signs are miracles used by God to signify the person and work of Jesus. As a result, many call this "the book of signs," for in these God reveals the glory and authority of Christ.*
- Thomas Constable, *John's account of the beginning of Jesus' public ministry highlights the fact that Jesus replaced what was old with something new (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). New wine replaced old water. Later a clean temple replaced a dirty one, a new birth replaced an old birth, living (flowing) water replaced well water, and new worship replaced old worship.*
- Edwin Blum, *Jesus' first miracle in the Gospel of John was a private one, known only to His disciples, some servants, and probably Jesus' mother. If Matthew had not yet been called to be one of the Twelve, this may explain why the miracle is not recorded in the Synoptics. Of the four Gospel writers only John was there.*
- Warren Wiersbe, *At this wedding, we see Jesus in three different roles: the Guest, the Son, and the Host.*
- William Barclay, *The very richness of the Fourth Gospel presents those who would study it and anyone who would expound it with a problem. Always there are two things. There is a simple surface story that anyone can understand and retell; but there is also a wealth of deeper meaning for those who have the eagerness to search and the eyes to see and the minds to understand.*

THE WEDDING AT CANA, JOHN 2:1-11

A. Jesus attended a wedding (1-2), ***On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.***

1. Related verses

- a. John 1:29, *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*
- b. John 1:35, *The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples,*
- c. John 1:43, *The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."*
- d. John 4:46, *So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill.*
- e. Note John 1:40-49 concerning the call of Jesus' disciples.

2. Comments

- a. *On the third day* refers to the third day after Nathaniel met Jesus or the third day after His arrival in Galilee.
- b. Jesus, His Mother and His disciples were invited to a wedding feast.
 - 1) The wedding was in Cana in Galilee, Nathaniel's hometown, in northern Israel, nine miles north of Nazareth.
 - 2) It was three days after Jesus was baptized by John and identified by the Holy Spirit as God the Son, John 1:32-34, *And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."*
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *This is the second of four public encounters that Mary had with Jesus (cf. Luke 2:41-52; Mark 3:31-35; John 19:26-27).*

- c. Weddings were important events in the Middle East at the time of Christ.
 - 1) Jewish marriages took places in two stages.
 - a) The betrothal period was like the engagement period now but they were considered husband and wife.
 - b) The actual union took place one year later.
 - 1] The groom went to the home of the bride with his friends and took her to their new home.
 - 2] The celebration could continue for a week.
 - 2) The importance of Jesus' attendance.
 - a) He showed concern for people and their daily lives.
 - b) Thomas Constable, *He was not a recluse. He participated in the normal affairs of human life ... Godliness does not require separation from human society ... A Christ-like person can be a socially active person and a joyful person.*
 - c) Charles Ryrie, *In doing his first miracle at a wedding, the Lord gave full approval to the institution of marriage.*
 - 3) Jesus' attendance was probably prophetic.
 - a) His earthly ministry began at a wedding and human history will end with a wedding, Revelation 19:9, *And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."*
 - b) It will be a time of celebration for those who have placed faith alone in Jesus Christ.
 - c) Larry Richards, *For Jesus, many trials lay between the beginning of his ministry at that wedding in Cana and the fulfillment of his ministry at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Trials are also a reality for us between our discovery of Christ and the fulfillment of faith's promise. But for Jesus and for us, the beginning and the end are set aside for joy!*

B. A problem at the wedding (3-5)

- 1. Jesus' mother told Him that the wine had run out (3), ***When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."***
 - a. A wedding feast lasted from several days to a whole week and the groom was responsible for providing wine during the wedding.
 - 1) Wine was an essential part of the diet in the ancient world.
 - a) It symbolized peace and prosperity, Psalm 104:15, *and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.*
 - b) Excessive drinking and drunkenness were condemned, Proverbs 20:1, *Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.*
 - 2) Running out of wine would have brought shame on the groom and bride.
 - a) Merrill Tenney, *To fail to provide adequately for the guests would involve social disgrace. In the closely knit communities of Jesus' day, such an error would never be forgotten and would haunt the newly married couple all their lives.*
 - b) Larry Richards, *The exhaustion of the supply of wine at the wedding in no way suggests the guests had drunk to excess.*
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *We have reason to believe that our Lord's earthly family was not prosperous, and it is likely that their friends were not wealthy people. Perhaps the shortage of wine was related to a low-budget feast.*
 - b. Did Mary expect Jesus to do something?
 - 1) Mary knew Jesus was the Messiah but did she think he could perform a miracle? He had lived in Nazareth for 30 years and had never performed a miracle.
 - 2) Possibly, it was because she knew Jesus was compassionate and would do whatever He could to solve the problem.
 - 3) Maybe, she hoped Jesus would contribute toward the purchase of additional wine which was not unusual.
 - 4) Leon Morris, *... she knew that angels had spoken about Jesus before his birth and that she had conceived him while still a virgin. She knew that his whole manner of life stamped him as different. She knew, in short, that Jesus was the Messiah, and it is not unlikely that she now tried to make him take such action as would show him to all as the Messiah she knew him to be.*

2. Jesus responded in a seemingly harsh manner (4), *And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”*
 - a. What is my relation to you concerning responsibilities?
 - 1) *Woman*, a simple, informal means of address which was not considered inappropriate when used for one’s mother.
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *Westerners would consider anyone addressing his mother as “woman” to be disrespectful, but this was an acceptable word for Him to use in Jesus’ culture (Gr. gunai, cf. 19:26; 20:15). It did not have negative connotations.*
 - 3) Leon Morris, *That Jesus calls Mary ‘woman’ and not ‘mother’ probably indicates that there is a new relationship between them as He enters his public ministry ... Jesus in his public ministry was not only or primarily the son of Mary, but “the Son of Man” who was to bring the realities of heaven to people on earth (1:51). A new relationship was established. Mary must not presume.*
 - b. *what does this have to do with me?*
 - 1) The phrase is possible best understood to mean, *what do we have in common?*
 - 2) Edwin Blum, ... *a common expression in Greek that referred to a difference in realms or relation. Note a response by a demon to Jesus, Mark 1:24, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.”*
 - 3) Thomas Constable, ... *Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? captures the spirit of the question. Jesus was saying in effect: We’re not on the same page. He was not dishonoring His mother. He was explaining to her that He would handle the situation, but in His own time and way. Jesus’ obedience to His heavenly Father was more important than His obedience to His earthly mother.*
 - c. What Jesus did was always based on the purposes set by His Father.
 - 1) *My hour has not yet come*, refers to His glorification beginning at the crucifixion to His coming reign on earth.
 - a) Leon Morris, *The meaning of “My time has not yet come” in the context is surely, “It is not yet time for me to act.” Yet we should notice a remarkable series of passages throughout this Gospel which refer to the “hour” or the “time” of Jesus ... But when the cross is in immediate prospect Jesus says, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (12:23; cf. also 12:27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1; the same idea may be present in Matt. 26:18, 45; Mark 14:41). If we are right in linking the present passage with the later ones Jesus is thinking of his messianic function. At the threshold of his ministry he looks forward to its consummation.*
 - b) Charles Swindoll, *The “hour” is always a reference to the time of His glorification, which was set to occur after His resurrection and not before.*
 - c) Warren Wiersbe, *At this point, John introduced one of the key elements of his record, the idea of “the hour.” Jesus lived on a “heavenly timetable,” marked out for Him by the Father. (See John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1; and note also the words of Jesus as recorded in John 11:9–10.) As you study John’s Gospel, you will observe how this concept of “the hour” is developed.*
 - d) William Barclay, *He saw his life not in terms of his wishes, but in terms of God’s purpose for himself. He saw his life not against the shifting background of time, but against the steady background of eternity. All through his life, he went steadily towards that hour for which he knew that he had come into the world ... We, too, must think not of our own wishes and our own desires, but of the purpose for which God sent us into his world.*
 - 2) Once Jesus starting performing miracles, His identification as Messiah and journey to the cross would begin.
 - a) This miracle revealed His glory and deepened His disciples’ faith in Him.
 - b) Larry Richards, *With this miracle, performed to protect his hosts from the embarrassment of running out of wine, Jesus took the first step along a path which would bring healing to many, the agony of the cross for him, and salvation to us.*
 - 3) The start of Jesus’ public ministry revealed a separation taking place.
 - a) Between Jesus and His mother: His ministry took precedence over the interests of His family, Mark 3:32-34. *And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers!*
 - b) Some accept Jesus as Savior and others as a misguided fool.
 - c) Charles Swindoll, *Jesus’ response to his mother clarified three misconceptions. First, the Messiah’s glory would come at the expense of His death, not as the result of a dazzling show of power. Second, the Messiah’s glory would come from God, not from people. And third, the Messiah’s glory would take place on the Father’s timetable, not anyone else’s ... He knows His destiny, and He’s in charge.*

3. Jesus' mother tells the servants to follow Jesus' instructions (5), ***His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."***
 - a. William Barclay, *She had something to do with the arrangements, for she was worried when the wine ran out; and she had authority enough to order the servants to do whatever Jesus told them to do.*
 - b. Mary did not take Jesus' response as a rebuke or refusal to help.
 - c. Thomas Constable, ... *she had confidence in His compassion and ability. She demonstrated admirable submission and faith toward Jesus. She allowed Jesus to take charge and solve the problem ...*
 - d. Edwin Blum, *Even though she did not fully understand, she trusted Him.*
 - e. Leon Morris, *Clearly Mary did not understand Jesus' words as a sharp rebuke. She doubtless realized that things between them were not the same as they had been hitherto. But she realized also that Jesus was not unmindful of the present difficulty, and that he would take what action was necessary. So she commanded the servants to obey his instructions.*
 - f. Warren Wiersbe, *It is worth noting that it was Jesus, not Mary, who took command and solved the problem; and that Mary pointed, not to herself, but to Jesus.*
 - g. Mary's words ring true today, do whatever Jesus tells you and point others to Jesus, not to yourself.

C. The problem resolved by Jesus (6-10)

1. He instructed the servants to fill the water pots with water and take a sample to the headwaiter. (6-8)
 - a. The water pots were used for ritual purification (6), ***Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.***
 - 1) Related verses
 - a) John 3:25, *Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.*
 - b) Mark 7:3-4, *(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, 4 and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.)*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) They were used for cleaning of hands before and after meals and for ritual baths, not for drinking water.
 - b) The cleansing was primarily to rid themselves from the defilement of Gentiles, separation to God from the world, more than cleaning from germs.
 - c) Normally, the water needed to be *living water*, running water, but in Galilee, rain water would do.
 - d) Grant Osborne, *The reason the jars were made of stone is because earthen jars that were made unclean were to be broken; there was no such prescription for stone jars (Lev 11:33-35).*
 - e) Edwin Blum, *The water in the six ... water jars (of 20 to 30 gallons each) was used for Jewish purification rites before and after meals (cf. Matt. 15:1-2). The contrast between the old order and the new way is evident (cf. John 4:13; 7:38-39).*
 - b. Jesus instructed the servants to fill the jars with water (7-8), ***Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.***
 - 1) Charles Swindoll, *The fact that Jesus did act by supernatural means tells us that He didn't object to His mother's request. Having addressed her misguided motivation, He delighted to help the host family.*
 - 2) Leon Morris, *Jesus tells "them," evidently the servants (as NIV), to fill the pots. This they do, "to the brim." This is possibly to indicate that there could be no addition to the contents. These pots at the time of the miracle contained nothing but water.*
 - 3) They took a sample to the master of the feast for him to taste and give his approval. This is the only time this title is mentioned in the New Testament. He was probably one of the guests charged with the responsibility of presiding over the wedding events.
 - 4) Edwin Blum, *Probably the water jars were outside. The master of the banquet, in charge of the festivities, would not know he was drinking from the purification jars. For a Jew this would be unthinkable.*

2. Jesus met the need of the bridegroom (9-10)

a. He turned water into wine (9), *When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom*

- 1) Only Jesus' mother, His disciples and the servants who drew the wine knew what had happened.
- 2) This allowed Jesus to honor His mother's request without identifying Himself before His time.
- 3) Larry Richards, *Jesus' power to perform miracles did not lie in his mastery of magic but within his own person.*
- 4) Thomas Constable, *The only thing that accounted for the change was Jesus' instructions. The servants had, after all, filled the pots with water up to the brim, so nothing else could have been added. They realized that Jesus had the supernatural power to change water into wine.*
- 5) Edwin Blum, *The significance of this miracle is that Christianity is an advance over Judaism. God has kept the best gift—His Son—until now.*

b. The wine was excellent (10), *and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."*

- 1) The miracle was an act of creation which did not require grapes, sun or time.
- 2) The common custom was to serve the best first and lesser after people had been drinking. Over the course of a feast, diluting wine with water was a common practice to make it go further.
- 3) Warren Wiersbe, *The quality of this new wine was so superior that the man in charge of the banquet highly praised it and, of course, the groom's family basked in the glory of the compliments.*
- 4) Unknown, *Jesus did much more than simply fill a need: He turned embarrassment into blessing...Instead of having to endure shame the groom was publicly honored for...saving the good wine for last. This reveals Jesus' deep concern for meeting people at their point of need, no matter how inconsequential that need may seem.*
- 5) Whatever Jesus does, He does it best.

D. The first sign of Jesus (11), *This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.*

1. Related verse, John 1:14, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

2. Comments

a. *the first of his signs*

- 1) Thomas Constable, *John's concluding references to the time and place of this miracle establish the historicity of this event and reduce the possibility of reading it as an allegory or a legend ... Since this was the "beginning of His signs," we can rest assured that Jesus did not perform other miracles before this one. Specifically, he did not make clay pigeons as a young boy, touch them, and cause them to fly away, as a popular legend has it.*
- 2) This miracle showed that Jesus has the same power to create (wine) that God demonstrated in creation.
- 3) F. F. Bruce, *John prefers to call the miracles of Jesus "signs" (semeia) pure and simple. Jesus himself (in this Gospel) calls them his "works" (erga).*
- 4) Leon Morris, *This is the first of Jesus' miracles, which John, as often, calls "signs." It is characteristic of them not so much that they arouse wonder and are hard to explain, nor even that they are demonstrations of the divine power, but rather that they point us to something beyond themselves. They show us God at work. They are meaningful ... The glory of the Messiah was revealed to some and hidden from others.*
- 5) Edwin Blum, *John used the word "signs" (semeion, v. 11) because he was seeking to draw attention away from the miracles as such and to point up their significance.*
- 6) Warren Wiersbe, *... the word John used in his book is not dunamis, which emphasizes power, but semeion, which means "a sign." What is a sign? Something that points beyond itself to something greater. It was not enough for people to believe in Jesus' works; they had to believe in Him and in the Father who sent Him (John 5:14-24).*
- 7) William Barclay, *We ought always to remember that it was in a humble home that Jesus manifested forth his glory. To him, home was a place for which nothing but his best was good enough ... It was to save a humble Galilaeian family from hurt that Jesus put forth his power. It was in sympathy, in kindness, in understanding for ordinary people that Jesus acted ... It is just by such deeds of understanding, simple kindness that we too can show that we are followers of Jesus Christ.*

- b. His disciples' faith increased.
- 1) Thomas Constable, *This miracle also resulted in these disciples believing in Him (cf. 1:50), not for the first time, but in a deeper way than they had believed previously (cf. 20:30–31).*
 - 2) Edwin Blum, *This initial faith would be tested and developed by a progressive revelation of Jesus ... At this point they did not understand His death and resurrection (John 20:8–9) but they did know His power.*
 - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *The miracle did something for His disciples. It revealed His glory (John 1:14) and gave them a stronger foundation for their faith. Though miracles alone are insufficient evidence for declaring Jesus to be the Son of God (2 Thes. 2:9–10), the cumulative effect of miracle after miracle should certainly convince them of His deity. The disciples had to begin somewhere, and over the months, their faith deepened as they got to know Jesus better.*
 - 4) Leon Morris, *The disciples are now said to have “believed” in him. Nathanael has already been recorded as a believer (1:50), and now others join him. They had known enough about Jesus before this to follow him. Now in this miracle they saw his glory, and despite his outward lowliness they put their trust in him.* 4) Stanley Toussaint, *This miracle portrays not only the joy Christ brings into a person's life but also the abundance of joy. ... for the Christian there is a new life in Christ. The old is passed away and there is a whole new life and perspective in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).*
 - 5) Charles Swindoll, *The supernatural display of power attested to His identity as God. While the time for Jesus' “glory” had not come, His disciples witnessed it nonetheless. And their faith was strengthened as a result.*

E. A brief time of rest (12), *After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.*

1. Related verse, Matthew 12:46, *While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him.*
2. Comments
 - a. Some believe Mary had no children except Jesus but it is best understood that Mary and Joseph had children after the birth of Jesus.
 - b. Thomas Constable, *Some time after the miracle just narrated, Jesus went down (topographically) from Cana to Capernaum. Cana was on a higher elevation than Capernaum, and Capernaum was about 13 miles northeast of Cana. Some family members (cf. Matt. 12:46; Mark 6:3) and Jesus' disciples accompanied Him.*
 - c. F. F. Bruce, *... Capernaum, where Jesus had his headquarters for the greater part of his Galilaean ministry recorded by the Synoptists (cf. also John 6:24, 59).*
 - d. Edwin Blum, *Capernaum became His home base (cf. Matt. 4:13; Mark 1:21; 2:1). From this point on He seemed to be alienated from His family (Mark 3:21, 31–35; John 7:3–5) and His hometown of Nazareth (Mark 6:1–6; Luke 4:14–30).*
 - e. Warren Wiersbe, *Jesus, His family, and His disciples remained in Capernaum a few days, and then He went to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Each Jewish man was required to attend three annual feasts at the Holy City: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16). The feasts mentioned in the Gospel of John are Passover (John 2:13; 6:4; 12:1), Tabernacles (John 7:2), and Dedication (John 10:22). The unnamed feast in John 5:1 may have been Purim (Es. 9:26, 31).*
 - f. Charles Swindoll, *Because Joseph is not mentioned by any gospel after Jesus' twelfth year (Luke 2:41–52), we can assume he has died. Mary probably lived with one of Jesus' half-brothers.*

SUMMARY

- This miracle was the first in hundreds of years and was an act of creation.
- Thomas Constable, *It was a miracle that had significance. Its significance appears to be that it showed that Jesus had the same power to create that God demonstrated in the Creation. Thus it pointed to Jesus being the Creator God who could transform things from one condition into another (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17).*
- Edwin Blum, *At this point they did not understand His death and resurrection (John 20:8–9) but they did know His power.*
- William Barclay, *This story is John saying to us: ‘If you want the new exhilaration, become a follower of Jesus Christ, and there will come a change in your life which will be like water turning into wine.*
- Charles Spurgeon, *Jesus Christ commenced the gospel dispensation, not with a miracle of vengeance, like that of Moses, who turned water into blood, but with a miracle of generosity, turning water into wine.*
- James Montgomery Boice, *Do you have religion? It will profit you nothing! Or do you have Christ? He alone can quench the hunger and thirst of your heart. He alone can put a song in your mouth that not even the angels can sing. He alone can give you true and everlasting joy.*