

### Lesson 3: John 2:1-12 Water to Wine

#### Introduction

According to the overall structure of John we laid out in our previous lesson, the gospel of John is divided into two halves, part 1, from chapter 2 to chapter 12, covers the public ministry of Jesus. Part 2, from chapter 13 to chapter 20, covers the week of Jesus death. We are calling part 1 “The Word Among Us” and part 2 “The Hour of His Glory.” The title of part 1 comes from the prologue 1:14 where John declares, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory.” The title of part 2 comes from several references to time in this gospel. The first reference to the hour of Jesus occurs in our text for this lesson, the story about the miracle in Cana. Let’s go ahead and read the text. This is John 2:1-12.

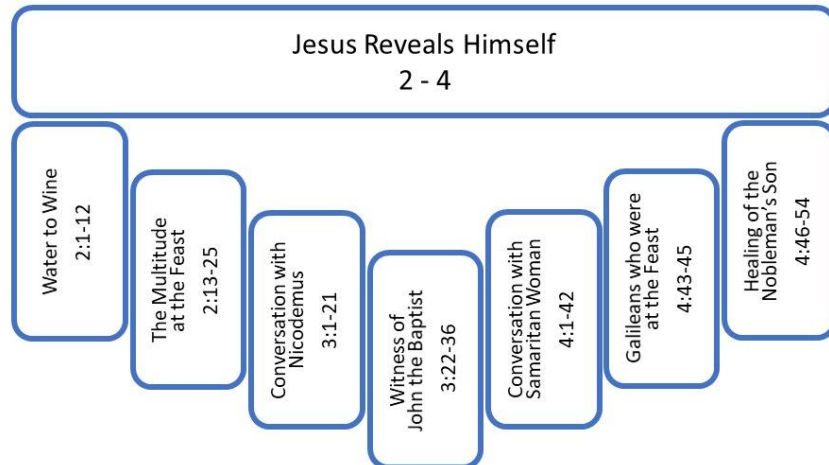
<sup>1</sup> On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; <sup>2</sup> and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup> When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” <sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does that have to do with us? 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 waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to them, “Fill the waterpots 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> 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 he serves* the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.” <sup>11</sup> This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, 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.

The reference to hour came in verse 5 with Jesus saying, “My hour has not yet come.” At the end of the first half of the Gospel, in chapter 12, verse 23, Jesus is finally going to say, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” This does not mean that the glory of Jesus is not seen until the that time when the hour comes. Here in verse 12 of this passage we are told that Jesus manifested his glory. Jesus has come to reveal himself and, in revealing himself, to reveal the nature of God. The revelation of Jesus Christ is going to build up to a climatic moment of revealed glory. The revelation starts here with the first sign.

As we study through John, it is helpful to keep these two major parts of John in mind to help us keep track of where we are in the story. The first part of John, “The Word Among Us,” can be further divided into two sections. Those two sections are marked off for us by two pairs of signs. The first pair of signs that mark off the first section of part 1 are the two signs that occur in Cana of Galilee. We have this miracle of the wedding feast, called the first sign, then in chapter 4 we have the healing of the nobleman’s son, called the second sign. So, this first section of part 1 includes chapters 2-4. This is the beginning of the revelation of his glory as he walks among us. A notable aspect of these first stories is the absence of significant opposition. Jesus reveals himself, but there is no strong push back from religious leaders or from gatherings of Jews. People are still investigating, trying to get a handle on who Jesus is.

I think this section has a seven-part chiasmic structure. On either side we have the two signs performed in Cana of Galilee. After the first sign we will see Jesus interacting with a gathering of people at the Passover feast in Jerusalem. And then just before the end, before the second sign at the end, Jesus is again interacting with people who were at this same feast. Moving inward, we have Jesus dialoging with the Pharisee Nicodemus in chapter 3 and then with the Samaritan woman at the well in chapter 4. Those two dialogues parallel each other. In between those two conversations, we

have the witness of John the Baptist as the center of our structure. This whole section from 2-4 we are titling, “Jesus Reveals Himself.”



The section starts with the miracle at the wedding of Cana. Let's go back through the text, observing what Jesus has chosen to reveal about himself through this first sign. We start with the basic context in verses 1 and 2.

### Context 2:1-2

<sup>1</sup> 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.

We start on the third day, which makes us wonder, “Third from what?” It feels like we are jumping into the middle of a sequence. Is it the third day of the week? Or what is this? And then we remember that John organized the previous narrative as a succession of four days. We started with priests and Levites questioning John the Baptist, and then, John the Baptist witnessing to the fact that he is not the Christ, but only a witness to the Christ. On the next day, Jesus came for baptism, and John witnesses to him, not out of his own knowledge, but in response to the Father who affirmed the Son by the Spirit who alighted on Jesus in the form of a dove. On the third day, disciples follow Jesus, begin to see who he is and give witness of what they believe to others. The pattern is repeated on the fourth day as more disciples follow, see, and witness. The chapter ends with the promise that the disciples are going to see much more.

This narrative begins, “On the third day...”, making it the seventh day from the beginning when those Levites and priests came to question John the Baptist. Both of those numbers make us perk up and pay attention, both third day and seventh day. Both seem significant. Does John just want to keep a good record of how much time has passed? Or does John notice something special in the timing and is communicating that to us here? We will just leave the question about the days as an observation for now. I want to go through the whole narrative first and then come back to possible symbolism because possible symbolism needs to be interpreted in context of the whole story and in context of the other potential symbols.

We are next told that we are in Cana of Galilee. The reference of Cana does not seem to be particularly significant, except that it enables John to make a nice parallel with the sign described at the end of chapter 4, which also takes place in Cana. The fact that we are in Galilee helps explain why Jesus and his mother and his Galilean disciples are all together at the wedding. We do not need to assume that Jesus is there as a special guest. Our text says that Jesus and the disciples were invited. We do not know if they all have a connection to the family. Or if this is some big event and lots of Galileans are invited. We are not told anything else. What we know is that there is a wedding in Galilee and all these Galileans are there. Mary is mentioned first, but not as Mary. John likes to refer to her as the mother of Jesus. If he had just said Mary, he would have had to clarify that it is Mary, the mother of Jesus, since there are a number of Marys in the life of Jesus. John just goes here with

“mother of Jesus.” And he does the same thing later in chapter 19, referring to her as mother of Jesus. In both cases, Mary’s status as Jesus’ mother is important to the story. Her importance to this story may even be emphasized by the fact that she is mentioned first, Mary, Jesus, and the disciples.

The scene is very human. It is a wedding celebration. They are all there to celebrate a man and a woman newly united in marriage. Though, we do recognize that the main point of this story in the gospel is not to affirm human marriage. The main point is to reveal to us something about Jesus through a sign that he performs at this particular wedding. The wedding is the background context for the sign. And we do not want to make the mistake of pulling the background to the foreground and then missing the point.

This text is not about marriage. It is about Jesus. So, our lesson is not going to be about marriage. That would miss the point. At the same time, I do believe, in a secondary sense, that this text does affirm marriage and affirms the celebration of marriage. We see here that Jesus is not a stoic. He does not avoid marriage. He does not avoid celebrations. In another place when Jesus spoke about marriage, he looked back to Genesis 2, affirming God’s plan to unite a man and a woman together as one. That is an affirmation of human intimacy, which also includes an affirmation of human sex. That teaching of Jesus outside of this context fits with his presence here. Jesus affirms marriage.

Since I have already brought up what this passage is not about, let me go ahead and add that this story is also not about drinking wine. Though there is the drinking of wine here. Jesus promotes, in fact, the drinking of wine here by making wine for people at the feast to drink. Again, Jesus is not a stoic who denies human enjoyment. He is not sitting at this feast, judging everybody who has a cup of wine sitting in front of them. When they run out, he is going to make them some more.

Some Christians, rightly concerned about the negative influence of alcohol, wrongly try to interpret the wine here as somehow non-alcoholic. That defies credibility. Wine in a Mediterranean culture contains alcohol. It was normally diluted with water when it was drunk. D. A. Carson writes that the dilution of the wine with water would have made the alcoholic content less than what you have in a typical beer. Carson also points out that drunkenness was culturally frowned on. So, though the text does not show that Jesus was against a person drinking wine, it certainly does not also go the other way and suggest that Jesus is okay with people getting drunk. The issue of wine is in the background, not in the foreground, of this story. So, like with marriage in general, we can only notice a few things about wine in general. Neither is the point of the story.

So, let’s keep going to the point of the narrative. We are moving towards that in verses 3-5 which introduce tension into the story. There is an emergency at this particular wedding. This is 3-5.

### **Tension 2:3-5**

<sup>3</sup> 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 does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.” <sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”

The simple structure of these three verses is this: Mary speaks, then Jesus speaks, then Mary speaks again. The mother of Jesus begins by pointing out to him that, “They have no wine.” And this is a big deal. Jesus is supposed to feel empathy for the bridegroom. His mother expects that. In an honor-shame culture, running out of food and drink is more than deeply embarrassing. It is a terrible way to start a new life together. It is shameful, and it will be remembered and talked about in Cana, in Galilee. Women in the West can certainly understand the worry Mary felt for the young couple. It seems to me as you move towards Eastern cultures that tension is heightened. Women feel shame if they do not serve an abundance to guests without running out. There should be plenty left over to prove that there was enough, and nobody went hungry, everybody had what they wanted. And in the case of a special occasion, like a wedding feast, there is no way that you allow food and drink to run out. This is a catastrophe, a significant human crisis. Mary feels it. She also feels some

responsibility to do something. We don't know why. But she does. And she transfers that sense of responsibility to her son Jesus.

We do not have reason to think that Mary was thinking Jesus would do a miracle. There is no biblical record of Jesus doing miracles as a child. John calls this miracle the first sign. And that may mean the first sign that he is reporting in his gospel. But even if John is primarily numbering the signs according to his use of them in his gospel, this miracle at the wedding feast does appear to be the first chronological miracle of Jesus. The four Gospels do not give us an exact timeline of events in Jesus' early ministry, but they do all report on his baptism by John the Baptist and the beginning of his teaching ministry as coming before making any mention of Jesus performing miracles. The miracles begin after Jesus has already become recognized as a teacher. So, it does not make sense to think Mary is asking for a miracle here right at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry before he had begun to perform miracles. And Mary would not need to expect a miracle anyway. She would have belief in the capability and influence of her son without the need for him to do a miracle. He could fix this.

We can try to imagine what Mary expected from Jesus. Certainly, Mary was aware of the competence of her son. She had lived with him. From the very beginning, when he was left as a boy by himself at the temple, he was found sitting in the midst of teachers, amazing the crowd with his questions and answers. After that Luke tells us, "[Jesus] continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him (Luke 2:40)." Over the years Mary would have seen Jesus growing in wisdom and ability. And now he is a grown man, and he has begun teaching. His influence is growing. He has disciples. Mary trusts him to do what needs to be done.

After Mary speaks. Jesus speaks. And, as so often happens when Jesus responds to something said to him, his words surprise us. We are not sure what he is talking about when he says his hour has not come, and whatever it is he is talking about, we are not sure why he is talking about it, right now? What does this have to do with the problem at the wedding?

The first thing we notice is that Jesus responds to his mother as "Woman." And that does not sound like an appropriate way to address your mother. And it is not really. There is no record from the times of Jesus that this was something you would say to your mother. In Croatian, a husband can call out to his wife, "Ženo", which is "Woman," and that is fine as long as his tone is appropriate. And we can see that as a term of endearment, even though we don't have that in English. But that is addressing a wife. That is not addressing a mother. Even if Jesus uses a nice tone here, there is some distancing in his response. He is choosing to refer to her as woman, rather than mother.

And this idea of distancing goes along with the next phrase he uses. My Bible translated it, "What does that have to do with us?" I have another Bible that translated it as, "What do I have to do with you?" The Greek this even more abrupt, "What to me and to you?" It is an idiom, which basically means, "What do you and I have in common in this matter?" I have another English version that translates the phrase as, "What does this have to do with me?" I don't like that one any more than the one I read to you, "What does that have to do with me?" Or, "What does that have to do with us?" It's not bad, but it loses the contrast, "What to me and to you?" Or, "What do I have to do with you?" There is a comparison going on in Jesus' phrase. There is a distancing. Not just from the problem, not just, "What does it have to do with us?" Or, "What does it have to do with me?" That is only distancing yourself from the problem. It is better to say, "What do I have to do with you in regard to this matter?" there is, again, a distancing from Mary. "What to me to you?"

It is a rebuke. And, we can imagine it as a kind rebuke. It does not need to be said with angry or frustrated or disrespectful tone. However, kindly spoken, it is still a rebuke. It separates Jesus from the authority of Mary as his mother. And it separates him from any family obligation that might be assumed by Mary as his mother. She is the mother of Jesus. She is also a woman, a mere human. Jesus is not going to be coerced by human considerations at any level. Jesus acts in harmony with and obedience to the will of the Father, not the will of any human, not the will of his human mother Mary.

Whatever this rebuke does, it lets us know that the resulting words and actions of Jesus do not come about because of obligation to or special relationship with his mother. Jesus acts freely and independently as a higher authority.

Jesus also says, "My hour has not yet come." I have already mentioned that Jesus will come back to the idea of his hour later in the narrative at the point when his hour does come. The hour of his glory will coincide with his crucifixion and then resurrection. That is the hour of his glory. But that time has not yet come. Here, we do not know that, yet. We don't know what his hour is. Mary would not have known what he was talking. She would not have known he was talking about his crucifixion. This is one of the literary aspects of the Gospel of John. He means for us to read his Gospel many times and to reflect on what we read. That was his own experience. He did not get much of what Jesus said during the lifetime of Jesus. There were things that he had to think back over. And just like that would have been true for John that is true for us. He does not explain everything to us the first time he presents it. There are things that Mary did not know here, yet. And so, we also are not told them either. And we are not going to be able to get it without reflection. We have to read through the story and then come back and think about it.

So, Mary cannot have known what he meant about his hour, but she did know that he was both the Son of God and the Son of David. She was the one person who absolutely knew that he was more than a man, that he had no human father. At his birth, angels spoke of him, shepherds worshiped him, wise men sought him out, prophets proclaimed his name. It is hard to imagine that Mary was not aware of Isaiah 9:6-7, and did not hold that close to her heart, "A child will be born to us a son will be given to us; the government will rest on his shoulders; and his name will be wonderful Counselor, mighty God, eternal Father, Prince of peace. There will be no end to the increase of his government or of his peace..."

So, I imagine for Mary that the hour she was looking for was his ascendance to kingship, when is he going to take up this role that God had given him to be our Savior as the Son of David, to take his place on the throne, to begin the increase of the government of peace that was foretold. In a sense, Jesus is speaking about this. But more precisely, he is speaking about what must happen first, his death and his resurrection.

So, though precisely what it means for his hour to come may not be clear to Mary, she does have some insight, and would not have been completely baffled by the rebuke. The timing of Jesus' Messianic ministry is his own, not hers. I think she would get that. He has not yet revealed himself publicly. It is not her right for her to push him or ask him to do so.

And though she may have received his correction, she is not done speaking. This feels so human. This feels so much like a mother. She goes on to, she turns to the servants and she says, "Whatever he says to you, do it." I think she did accept his rebuke. And I do think this is not a mother trying to override her son. It is a mother who is not giving up. I think she got the message that she does not have the influence over his time. And I think she got the message that she is asking more than she realizes. If Jesus was not yet ready to reveal himself, then she would be inappropriately drawing him into a public situation. She needs to be aware of that. He is not just her son. He is the Messiah. There is a lot at stake for him in whatever he says and whatever he does. He has reminded her of that. But she still asks.

There is something in their relationship that allows her to receive correction from her son and still trust him to do something. So, even though she humbly received his message, she continues to act very much like a mother, very much like the woman he has called her. She feels the problem of no wine deeply. She knows her son can do something about it. And she persists by speaking to the servants. She goes on and puts Jesus' name out there. And we are just going to see what he does.

And Jesus, having communicated his independence of Mary decides to act just as he had planned to act before Mary even asked him and before he correct Mary. He gives these instructions to the servants in 6-8.

### Instructions 2:6-8

<sup>6</sup> Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots 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*.

It is a good thing the servants were obedient because Jesus' instructions make no sense. If he had stopped to think about what he was saying...but they didn't. They just did what he told them to do. They filled up the six stone purification jars with water. All together the six stone jars held between 100 and 150 gallons, which is 500 to 750 liters. That is a lot of liquid. According to Old Testament custom, Jews washed themselves as well as cooking vessels when they or their vessels became ritually unclean. In addition to Torah law, Matthew 15:2 refers also to the custom of the elders about ritually washing before eating. So, there are both biblical and other traditional practices of washing that require jars of water to be present. So, it explains why the jars are here at the wedding.

Jesus may have just chosen to use the jars out of convenience. They were the largest liquid containers available. But the number of potentially symbolic details in this story keep adding up. So, we have got to wonder about the presence of purification jars.

The servants finish doing what they were told, they fill up the jars and they take some water to the headwaiter. Now we get the miracle in verses 9-10.

### Miracle 2:9-10

<sup>9</sup> 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 he serves* the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now."

The headwaiter or steward is in charge of managing the feast, but the bridegroom had the responsibility of providing all the food and drink. It may have been customary to provide the best wine first because people who have had a good portion of wine are not so discerning about what comes after. Whatever the custom, the state of intoxication of the people at this particular feast is not emphasized. The steward knows the traditional custom, and he is surprised. Apparently, whenever Jesus does something, he does it well and producing good wine is no exception. Jesus knows good wine. There is something festive and fun about it. We can imagine the up and down emotional ride the bridegroom has just experienced. A moment before he was facing deep shame as a young, newly married man. Now, not only has Jesus saved him from shame, but he is also getting credit for providing excellent wine. Not only is he not shamed, he is honored.

On the human level, it is a wonderful wedding gift. Jesus turns a crisis into cause for celebration. Just as the feast was about to make a dreadful downturn, the fun and joy of the celebration is recharged.

And while the comment of the steward, "You saved the best for last," works well on the simple level of the wine at the wedding, we suspect the steward has said something profound without realizing it.

So, let's read one more verse and then come back to the symbolic elements scattered through the whole story. This is verse 11.

### Glory and Belief 2:11

<sup>11</sup> This beginning of *His* signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

The reference again of Cana provides an *inclusio* for the narrative. It is a nice way of framing a story by ending similar to how you began. In this sign Jesus has manifested his glory, that is made known his glory, revealed his glory, and his disciples have believed.

His glory is manifested through the power of his miracle. Jesus has just changed the molecular structure of water simply by declaring it to be so. There is no trick, no gimmick, no technology. The power of his will has created wine. A few days before Nathanael had called Jesus, "Son of God". Jesus had responded with the question, "Do you believe?" Then he told them they would see much greater things. This is the first of those much greater things. Now do you believe he is the Son of God? The text says they do.

We are not told if anyone else believed at the wedding. We do not know who else knew about the miracle other than the servants. Maybe others believed. That is not the point of the story. The point is that Jesus told his disciples they would see more. He revealed himself to them. And they have seen. And they have believed.

John does not get here into the validity belief or the nature of belief or the maturity of belief. Since the belief is not questioned here, we are left assuming that it is true belief. But we do not have to assume the disciples had full insight, that they understood everything that had gone on. Belief and knowledge grow. They have begun to believe, according to the knowledge they have at this point and according to their awareness of what is going on.

Jesus has manifested his glory clearly through power in this miracle. It is a sign because it points to the nature of who Jesus is as the one who creates through the power of his word. This is an affirmation of the claim in the prologue that through the Word "all things came into being."

From our first reading of the story, we get that this miracle is pointing us to Jesus as God. The main point is not hidden. At the same time, the more we read the story, the more we begin to notice that there is some smaller lettering on this sign that we missed the first few times we read it.

### **The Symbolism of the Sign**

Let's go back and talk about the symbolism.

What are some of the details that stand out as potentially symbolic? Here are some possibilities.

- Third day
- Seventh day
- A wedding
- Wine
- Purification jars
- The number 6
- Saving the best for last

When I separate out these details from the story, I cannot help but think of the crucifixion, especially with Jesus comment, "My hour has not yet come." He is pointing us to the crucifixion. We see that later in the story. So, then we start noticing other things, like third day and wine and purification.

But there is also this context of wedding and bridegroom, which leads other people to see a reference to the glorification of all believers in heaven with Jesus described as the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Some scholars feel a need to choose whether we are being pointed towards the cross or towards the fulfillment of all things in the new Jerusalem. Since I am not really a scholar, I do not feel the need to choose. I believe we are being pointed towards the wedding of the Lamb, that great feast in heaven that occurs after Jesus comes back to gather in his bride the church. At the same time, I believe we also hear in this story the dark notes of crucifixion that must be played before the joyful wedding music can be heard.

I believe the reference to the third day points us to the crucifixion. The hour of Jesus suggests that shocking moment of glorification when God's love and justice kiss at the cross. That is the moment we see fully and ultimately what it means to say that Jesus is full of grace and truth, that in Jesus

God's name is realized. We see his nature when we realize that our great king would die for us, unconditionally, sacrificially, so that we might be presented pure and clean on the wedding day.

Along with this day being the third day, when we look back over chapter one, we realize it is also the seventh day, which is a day of completion, rest, fulfillment. So, at the same time that we are being pointed towards crucifixion, we are also being pointed ahead towards fulfillment.

Likewise, the wine points to both. At the last supper, Jesus says, "Drink this all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:27-28)." Does John expect us to think of wine in this way, as the blood of Jesus? I think he does. He could have just told us that there were six stone jars nearby. But he goes on to make sure we know they are jars of purification. The purpose of those jars is to enable a ritualistic washing of water that symbolizes atonement from sin. That water may provide real physical cleansing, but only symbolic spiritual cleansing. That water does not remove sin. It does not really make somebody clean. The penalty of sin is death. We have all sinned. We all deserve death. The only way we are washed clean is if someone righteous is willing to spill his blood for us in our place to take our debt. Jesus provides true purification for us through his blood. We remember this every time that we drink the wine of the Lord's Supper. Turning the water of Old Testament purification to New Covenant wine points us toward the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

Jesus also went on to say at the Last Supper, "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." So, even as he connects the wine to the symbol of blood of death for our sins, he also mentions wine in a future context of joyful reunion. There is a joyful drinking of wine with Jesus in heaven, fitting for the image of a wedding feast.

John's reference to the number of water jars may be meant to emphasize the difference between the symbolic water and the wine which is Jesus' blood. Six is elsewhere taken as a number of incompleteness. If seven is a number of fullness or perfection, which it is in John, then six, as not quite seven, represents imperfection. So, that which came before is not perfect. The water could not really cleanse us from our sin. The blood of Jesus really is perfect. It really does purify us from our sin.

In the prologue, John had compared Moses with Jesus. The grace of the law through Moses is surpassed by the grace of the New Covenant that comes from Jesus. The Mosaic law emphasized symbolic atonement whereas the New Covenant fulfills that symbolism in Jesus with realized atonement, real. The Mosaic law also received the name of God spoken. They only could hear it. Whereas the New Covenant is mediated through the Word of God who has become flesh. We do not just hear the word, we see the Word. The Word is with us.

When the steward says, "You saved the best for last!" He is proclaiming the truth of the New Covenant. What came before was a shadow of the real. It seemed good. And it was good. The Mosaic Law was good. But it is not as good as the New Covenant. Jesus is not a shadow. Jesus is the real.

The tragedy of the cross must precede the celebration of the Lamb. The bride must be made ready. And the only way she can be made ready is through the death of the bridegroom. This is not ultimately tragic because the bridegroom rose again and went to prepare a place for his bride. He will come again for her. The joy of this wedding feast in Cana is but a shadow of the exuberant joy of the wedding feast of the Lamb when he gathers his bride the church, the gathered who have believed in his name. There will be joy and laughter and fellowship and love and good wine, like we have never experienced. Every happy wedding is a little glimpse of the celebration that awaits.

This miracle, which John calls a sign, points us ahead to both of these realities, first to the cross and then to the wedding of the Lamb. It is doubtful that the disciples understood the symbolism present in this first sign. They witnessed the power of the creative miracle, of water changed to wine. They got that. They saw the big lettering of the sign. In that way, Jesus manifested the glory of his power as the Son of God. And they believed.



Reflecting over his experience with Jesus, what he saw and what he heard, John realized later that more was going on than he first knew. It was not hidden. The lettering was just smaller. He did not have the awareness he needed to read it. But he got that awareness later on. And he wrote those details down for us to consider ourselves as we walk with Jesus and as we keep going back over this story in our own mind, looking closer to see what things we may have missed in how this sign at the wedding feast points us to Jesus.

### Reflection questions

1. Read John 2:1-12. Make a list of things that stand out to you as interesting, important, strange or confusing. What stands out to you? What questions come to mind?
2. Even though this story is not about marriage what do you take away from Jesus' presence at this wedding?
3. Also, this story is not about drinking alcohol, but the drinking of wine is present. What questions does that raise for you that you could study further elsewhere in Scripture?
4. How do you understand Jesus' comments to Mary in verse 4? If this is Jesus distancing himself from Mary, why does he do that? Why speak to Mary strongly like that?
5. Stop and think for a moment about the nature of this miracle. You may have become so familiar with the story that the magnitude of what Jesus did has worn off on you. What has to take place for water to be transformed into excellent wine? What does this reveal to you about Jesus?
6. What elements of symbolism stand out to you? Do you see the crucifixion here? Do you see here the joyful gathering of the church in heaven?
7. What does it mean that the disciples saw and believed? Did they not believe days earlier in chapter 1? What do they now believe?
8. The disciples proclaimed some big truths about Jesus in chapter 1, "Son of God," "Messiah," "King of Israel." If you grew up in church, you proclaimed from a young age big truths about Jesus as you sang the worship songs and hymns. You proclaimed these big truths before you experienced for yourself something of the power or provision or holiness or awe of God. When have you experienced God showing you more about who he is? What is some event in your life, some experience that open your eyes to see Jesus? That opened your eyes to truths you had sung about but did not understand?