

“Jesus’ First Miracle”

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John 2:1-12

I. Introduction

Each Gospel writer had a mountain of material from which to choose when he wrote his particular Gospel. With this in mind, in the last verse of his Gospel, in [John 21:25](#), John wrote, “**Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.**” Out of the over 30 different recorded miracles of Jesus, John chose to include only 8, as he called them, “**miraculous signs.**” Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, John selected these 8 as examples or signs to demonstrate Jesus’ glory and to prove Jesus’ deity. [2 Peter 1:21](#) says, “**For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**”

John began his Gospel at the beginning of Jesus’ 3-year ministry. By the time He came to His first miracle, Jesus had already called 5 or, probably, 6 disciples who had put their trust in Him. In the coming years, they would learn more about Him. Most of us are familiar with many of Jesus’ miracles, but we need to remember that for the disciples, each day and each new event brought marvels that were difficult to understand. Only after Jesus’ death and resurrection would they really comprehend what Jesus had been trying to teach them. [John 2:22](#) says, “**After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.**” In [John 14:26](#) Jesus had promised, “**But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**”

Much of which John wrote in the first five chapters of his Gospel are not found in any of the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This includes Jesus’ First Miracle. There are stories-traditions which claim that Jesus, as a little boy down in Egypt or in Nazareth, would make clay birds with other little boys and then would touch the clay birds and they would fly away. This makes a nice story, but there is absolutely no truth in it. In fact, John makes it clear that Jesus’ 1st miracle was done “**at Cana in Galilee**” as

He changed water into wine; [verse 11](#) says, “[This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee.](#)” John’s record of Jesus’ 1st miracle can be divided into 4 parts beginning with the scene.

II. Jesus’ 1st Miracle

A. The Scene The scene is *a wedding in Cana*. The phrase “[the third day](#)” probably meant three days after the call of Nathanael back in [John 1:45-51](#) which, you may remember, was the 4th day in John’s chronology. So, three days after calling Nathanael or one week after John the Baptist’s interview with the Jewish authorities there was the wedding in Cana. It may have taken Jesus and His disciples those 3 days to reach Cana from the place where Nathanael met Jesus.

A wedding in those days was a great celebration—perhaps you remember the musical “*The Fiddler on the Roof*.” Unlike today, in Jesus’ day the groom was responsible for the expenses of the celebration. The wedding marked the completion of the betrothal period. The betrothal itself could last several months up to a year. Although the two didn’t live together until after the wedding ceremony, the couple was considered legally husband and wife. Only a divorce could terminate the betrothal. For example, consider Mary and Joseph—[turn to Matthew 1:18-19](#). On the night of the wedding ceremony—Wednesday, if the girl were a virgin, or Thursday, if she were a widow—the groom and his friends would go to the bride’s house. They would then escort his bride and her attendants to the groom’s house, where the ceremony and banquet would be held and the celebration could go on for at least a week. ([Matthew 25:1-10](#) is a picture of this.)

“[Jesus’ mother](#) (John never refers to Mary by name in his gospel) [Jesus’ mother was there](#)” at this particular wedding. (Since Joseph is not mentioned in any of the Gospels after the account of the journey to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve in [Luke 2:41-50](#), it may be that Joseph was already dead.) That both Mary and Jesus attended suggests that the wedding involved relatives or friends of the family. Most likely, the disciples were invited because of their connection to Jesus. The different terminology used for Mary—she “[was there](#)”—while Jesus and His disciples “[had been invited](#)” also implies that she had some official role at the event. For this reason, she was aware of the situation regarding the lack of wine, and she was the one who dealt with the problem.

Jesus was not a recluse like John the Baptist. Instead of being a “voice in the desert or wilderness” (John 1:23), Jesus accepted invitations to social events, even though His enemies used this practice to accuse Him. For example, turn to Matthew 11:18-19. Jesus entered into the normal experiences of life. He mingled socially with people and ministered to them in their daily activities. Then there was . . .

B. The Crisis: “*They have no more wine.*” There weren’t many different beverages at that time—due to the warm climate and lack of refrigeration or purification, fruit juice tended to ferment. Water wasn’t always clean enough to drink, so wine was the staple drink in ancient Palestine. To avoid risk of drunkenness, wine was commonly diluted with water to between 1/3 to 1/10 strength—the alcohol in the wine would serve to purify the water at the same time. For the record, the Bible does not forbid drinking wine; in some cases, it commends it—in 1 Timothy 5:23 Paul wrote Timothy, “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.” However, the Bible strongly condemns drunkenness—for example, Romans 13:13 says, “Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.”

When the wine ran out at that wedding celebration, a major crisis developed. Not only would this be an embarrassment that would follow the couple and their families for the rest of their lives, but it would also leave the groom and his family open to a lawsuit by the bride’s family for failing to meet their responsibilities. Jesus never “performed” a miracle just to amaze His audience with His power. All of His miracles, His “miraculous signs,” met specific needs—like opening blind eyes or deaf ears or feeding hungry people or calming a storm. Jesus’ miracle of turning water into wine met the genuine need of a family who otherwise faced a huge social and financial catastrophe.

Being involved in the serving and aware of the serious crisis that had developed, Mary anxiously said to Jesus, “They have no more wine.” If she were already a widow, Mary would naturally have turned to her firstborn son as the head of the house. Whether or not she expected Jesus to perform a miracle is not clear, especially since He hadn’t done one before. Yet Mary knew better than anyone else who Jesus was. She was well aware of His miraculous birth, the things said of Him by the angel Gabriel, by the shepherds, by

Simeon and Anna, and by the Wise men. She had experienced His sinless life and perfection as He grew up. Perhaps, having heard what John the Baptist said about Him and recognizing a new facet of Jesus' life, she was urging Him to reveal Himself publicly as the Messiah, she knew Him to be. But Mary didn't tell Jesus what to do, she simply reported the problem.

Jesus' reply seems a bit abrupt and even harsh when He said, **"Woman, why do you involve me?"** *"Woman"* was a polite, but not intimate form of address. The NIV tries to show this by adding the word **"dear."** Jesus used the same word—*woman*—for the woman at the well in [John 4:21](#), for the woman caught in adultery in [John 8:10](#), for His mother as He hung on the cross in [John 19:26](#) and for Mary Magdalene near the tomb after Jesus' resurrection in [John 20:15](#). Actually, the word *"woman"* is more like using the English word *"Ma'am."* In His response, Jesus made it clear to His mother that He was no longer under her supervision but that from now on, He would be doing what His heavenly Father wanted Him to do. His public ministry had begun, and earthly relationships would not determine His actions. Jesus also made it clear that He would act according to God's timetable. **"My time has not yet come."** Turn to [John 7:2-8](#). Jesus was very aware of *"the right time"*—of God's time.

Mary's words to the servants showed that she was willing to let her Son do whatever He pleased, and that she trusted Him to do what was right. We would be wise if we would follow her example—turn to [Philippians 4:6-7](#). Mary gave her problem to Jesus and from that point on, it was Jesus, not Mary, who took command and took care of the crisis. Following the crisis there was . . .

C. The Miracle: *Jesus changed water into wine.* Jesus' first miracle was not a spectacular event that everyone witnessed. Mary, the disciples, and the servants knew what had happened, but no one else at the feast had any idea that a miracle had taken place. The Jews used **"stone water jars"** to hold the water used for ritual purification because they believed that, unlike clay jars, they did not become unclean ([Lev. 11:33](#)).

When Jesus had the stone water jars filled to the brim with water, Mary's faith and confidence in her Son were not misplaced. Since the water was up to the top, there was no way anything else could be added, *"the water changed into wine"* was indeed a miracle. By ordering the jars to be completely filled, Jesus also

demonstrated His grace—undeserved favor. Such a large amount of wine (120-180 gallons) was more than enough to last for the rest of the celebration. Jesus not only rescued the bride and groom from an embarrassing situation, but the leftover wine also provided them with a generous wedding gift.

Regardless of what they thought, the servants obeyed Jesus and “**drew some out and took it to the master of the banquet.**” The quality of this new wine was so superior that the man in charge of the banquet highly praised it, “**You have saved the best till now.**” The groom’s family must have been delighted by all the compliments. What they didn’t know is that this wine didn’t come from the normal process of fermentation, from grapes, vines, the earth, and the sun. The Lord Jesus brought it into existence from nothing but water. This was evidence, proof that He is the Creator.

D. The Results John gave two results of Jesus’ first miraculous sign. **1)** Jesus’ first miracle was more than turning water into wine, it “**revealed Jesus’ glory;**” i.e., He put His deity on display. Jesus’ miracles or signs were not simply powerful displays of compassion but were also designed to reveal who He really was, since they unmistakably displayed God at work. In **Acts 2:22** Peter preached, “**Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him.**”

Sadly, signs, miracles, and wonders do not necessarily convince people to believe in the Lord and the Gospel. On the way to the Garden of Gethsemane in **John 15:24** Jesus told His disciples, “**If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.**” Instead of believing, many, including the Jewish leadership, hated Jesus. For that matter, looking at **John 2:12**, there is no record that any of the servants who witnessed Jesus’ miracle followed Him. “**After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples**”—only his mother and brothers and his disciples went to Capernaum:

2) The second result was that “**his disciples put their faith in him.**” Having heard John the Baptist’s testimony that Jesus was the Messiah, having heard Jesus’ own words, and believing in Him, they now saw first-hand miraculous confirmation of that faith. And because of John’s record others would believe, too.

III. Conclusion

At first glance, it is easy to wonder about the servants and what appears to be their lack of response, but people today aren't any different. Every Christmas and Easter we celebrate two miracles—the miraculous birth and amazing resurrection of Jesus Christ. But there are many who refuse to believe and make Jesus their Lord and Savior. To compound their blindness, their stubbornness, they can see the miracles in people's lives that occur through prayer or through the strength of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life but rather than believe, these stiff-necked people try to come up with some other rationale for what happened. As Jesus said, not everyone will believe. In [Matthew 22:14](#) He said, “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

This miracle also presents a practical lesson in service for God—we assist God in performing miracles. The water turned into wine because the servants cooperated with Jesus and obeyed His commands. Several of the miraculous signs in John's Gospel involve the cooperation of man and God. Whether we pass out bread like the disciples in the feeding of the 5000 in [John 6:1-13](#), or wash away mud like in the healing of the man born blind in [John 9:1-7](#), or help roll away a stone like in the raising of Lazarus in [John 11:38-44](#), we are assisting God in performing a miracle.

There's another lesson for us: Jesus wants to use us as water jars today. [Turn to 2 Corinthians 4:6-9](#). Jesus wants to fill us with the water, the light of the Word of God. [Ephesians 5:18](#) says, “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” When you are filled to the brim with the Holy Spirit, a miracle will take place in your life—a miracle that will be seen by others. As Paul wrote in [1 Thess. 5:18-20](#) when you are filled, you will be joyful always, in constant communication with God, and able to give thanks in all circumstances. The challenge from [Rom. 12:1-2](#), is “to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Be filled with the Holy Spirit and become a miracle of Jesus Christ that is unable to be ignored by those around you.