

## **“Christ’s First Miracle”**

### **John 2:1-22**

“The Gospel of John is the most hated book in the Bible and the most beloved – and for the same reason. It clearly declares that Jesus of Nazareth is God.” Gordon Clark

#### *John 2:1-22*

*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." 4 Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." 6 Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. 7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. 9 When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. 10 And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!" 11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.*

*12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.*

*13 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. 15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." 18 So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"*

*19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."*

*20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"*

*21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.*

There are many spiritual lessons in the Gospel of John.

The main reason that the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, or the Christ, was due to their rigid literal interpretation of the OT Scriptures. John gives to us a spiritual insight, and sad to say, many people miss the majesty of the spiritual interpretation of the OT given in the NT.

The Jewish leaders were looking for Elijah the prophet to literally return as Malachi had prophesied. But when John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah they did not receive him as the Elijah who was to come.

Jesus explained to His disciples that John the Baptist was the Elijah that was to come [Matthew 17:13]:

Matthew 17:1-13

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; <sup>2</sup> and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. <sup>3</sup> And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. <sup>4</sup> Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

<sup>5</sup> While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" <sup>6</sup> And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. <sup>7</sup> But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." <sup>8</sup> When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

<sup>9</sup> Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."

<sup>10</sup> And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

<sup>11</sup> Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. <sup>12</sup> But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands." <sup>13</sup> Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist. NKJV

So much for rigid literalism.

The Jewish leaders were looking for a military king who would free them from the Roman government. But when King Jesus comes as the King of the hearts of men He is despised and rejected because He did not fit their literal interpretation of a king.

Jesus is the King, but He said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

Some did receive Him through the power of God [1:12-13].

Men like Nathanael, through divine revelation, can proclaim,  
***"Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"***

**"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana..."**

The circumstances are carefully arranged by divine predestination. It must be a **wedding** because that is what the New Covenant is.

***Romans 7:4***

***Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another — to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.***

God and man were "divorced" under the Old Covenant.

The eternal marriage is viewed as consummated in the vision of John in the Revelation: ***"The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready."*** Revelation 19:7

John opens this Gospel with a declaration that the eternal Word, who is God, became flesh and the Word is the very Creator of everything that is not God.

By this declaration that Jesus Christ is the Creator we are reminded that there was a **first week** in the history of the world when in six 24-hour days everything that is was created and on the seventh day the Lord rested.

To say that God “rested” does not mean that God was “tired” but that He had finished creating and saw that everything was very good.

Now here in John’s Gospel there is a **second week** where Jesus of Nazareth is introduced to the dark sinful world as the long-promised Messiah, the *Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*

Do not be confused about the “weeks”. It is a way of emphasizing the significance of Jesus of Nazareth who is the eternal Word. There is the first week of creation and there is the second week when the Word of God proclaims His absolute authority over His creation and manifests His glory with an act of divine power by turning water into wine.

On the first four days of this second week Jesus calls His first disciples.

Do not miss that in each instance when Jesus met a man that Jesus **spoke first**, because this is always the way with God.

*We love Him because He first loved us.*

Jesus knew the hearts of these men who had come down from Galilee to be disciples of John the Baptist. Jesus knew what Andrew was seeking. Jesus knew that He would convert Peter from a man afraid to say that he was a disciple of Jesus into a “rock.” Jesus had seen Philip as he meditated under a fig tree and prayed for Messiah to come! Jesus knew that Nathanael was an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!

**Behold, true Israel, here is your King! Here is the Lamb of God!**

In Chapter 2 we are at the end of that second week, *On the third day*, and we are again reminded of the Creator as Jesus commands that six stone waterpots, which represent the six days of creation, be filled with water, which He then turns into wine.

This is Christ's first miracle as the Word made flesh. Behold His glory!

Miracles are rare in the Bible, separated by centuries, Moses and the exodus from Egypt; Elijah and Elisha; Daniel, and finally Jesus and the apostles.

“A miracle is an event in the external world, wrought by the immediate power of God, and designed to accredit a message or messenger.” Boettner

There is much significance in the fact that this first miracle of Jesus' public ministry takes place at a wedding. A wedding is a **covenant**. Marriage is the first institution that God gave to man. The Bible begins and ends with a marriage; Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and in Revelation; Christ and His bride, the church.

God made a covenant with Adam. God is a covenant God.

The Old Covenant was introduced in the Garden of Eden with a single “law” and there were subsequent covenants made with Noah and Moses, et al.

Each successive covenant did not change any previous covenant but gave progressive understanding of the nature of God and His righteous demands.

The Old Covenant was based on the obedience of man and was never successfully obeyed because the first Adam as our representative changed the nature of man from innocence to sin.

The purpose of the Old Covenant was not to provide a way that man could be right with God but rather to shut man up to the perfect righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

If you have any notion that God ever justified anyone in the OT because they obeyed the law listen to Paul and be reminded of Romans 3:20:  
***“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”***

But there is an eternal covenant. Before the creation and before God gave His covenant to Adam, there was a **Covenant of Grace** between the persons of the Holy Trinity. This covenant was hinted at immediately after Adam sinned [Genesis 3:15] and the progressive revelation of the New Covenant continued with Abraham and Moses and David and the prophets in the OT.

The Covenant of Grace or the New Covenant is not “new” in the sense that it was given **after** the Word became flesh. Christ is as a Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

What is “new” about the New Covenant is the understanding of it. The New Covenant is no longer veiled in types and shadows of the OT economy. Now there is an open declaration of the New Covenant by the Son of God.

That is what “**the Lamb of God**” means!

Given the revelation of the NT we can now read and interpret the OT and learn what the prophets and the elect angels could not fully understand.

#### **1 Peter 1:10-12**

**10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into.**

We will not stay any longer on this matter of Old and New Covenants except to say again that when John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God he is declaring the end of the OT system of sacrifice and that the One the New Covenant is all about is here and He is Jesus of Nazareth!

For the last 150 years many people have been taught that this old covenant system of animal sacrifices will be once again practiced in a new temple in Jerusalem. To believe that is to deny the finality of the Old Covenant and the permanence of the New Covenant in the blood of the Lamb!

Jesus proclaims His own **mediatorship** under the New Covenant of grace when He tells Nathanael, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”*

“In this remarkable statement Christ compares His office with that which Jacob saw in a vision at Bethel. Jacob sees a ladder set up from earth to heaven and the angels ascending and descending upon it. That ladder is the temporal ladder of the Mosaic covenant, with its “ministry of angels” {Acts 7:53}, and is contrasted in Christ’s words with the fulfillment of the promise in Himself, when He, by His own mediatorship, becomes the ladder communicating between heaven and earth. In short, He informs Nathanael that in “the kingdom of God” {the Gospel state} shortly to be established, the Old covenant would be moved out of the way by His own mediatorship and the New covenant of grace would reign in him.” Charles Alexander

The commentaries are very good on the facts and events of John 2. They are woefully weak on the significance of the change of the way that God will be worshiped.

Look at your Bible and think with me as we examine a few of the points that are made.

**On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."**

**4 Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."**

**5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."**

Cana is seven miles north of Nazareth and is the home of Nathanael [21:2].

Wine is a symbol of joy in the OT [Cf. Psalm 104] and they ran out of wine. **Judaism is dead.** When Jesus changes the water into wine it is symbolic of the change of the covenants. The ritualistic washings are gone and the new wine is a symbol of life and salvation, and is so ordained of Christ in the symbol of the cup at the Last Supper:

*“This is my blood of the new covenant shed for many for the remission of sins.”*

What Jesus says to His mother is a mild rebuke. “Woman, what do you have in common with Me?” He shows that His mother does not control His divine Person. There is no disrespect but a firm statement of His authority.

His words are prophetic and He is setting aside the voice of the old covenant and pointing to “His hour” when law would give way to grace.

In John’s Gospel “His hour” refers to the hour of His death on the cross. John makes seven references to the time of His death.  
[2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 12:27; 16:32; 17:1]

Once in the history of the world will He submit to the hands of wicked men.

John is a spiritual book and must be interpreted as such. John records seven miracles. Seven is the number of perfection in the Bible.

**6 Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. 7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. 9 When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. 10 And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!" 11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.**

While you can go too far with numerology in the Bible there are some things that are helpful. Six is the number of creation and there are six waterpots of stone or earth and they are “empty.”

There are the seven “I AM’s” of Christ.

There are seven miracles as seven is the number of perfection. John wrote that the world could not contain the books if all the works of Christ were written down.

These six waterpots were *after the manner of purification of the Jews*. Why does John tell us that? There must be a connection between the rituals of the Jews and the significance of the water turned into wine.

The wine had run out, there is no joy in the dead religion of Judaism.



After Cana, Jesus went down to Capernaum. Then He returns to Judea where most of what John records takes place. He goes up to Jerusalem for the first of those Passovers by which we measure the period of the Lord's earthly ministry of three and one-half years.

**12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.**

**13 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. 15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."**

Jesus goes to Jerusalem and John records the first of those two cleansings of the temple, which mark the opening, and the close of the Savior's earthly ministry. Here is no weak and effeminate Man. He takes a whip of cords and drives out the moneychangers.

All of Christ's words and deeds are in fulfillment of OT prophecy.

The last verse of Zechariah {14:21}: ***In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.***

Here is the rebuke of national Israel and another sign of Messiah.

The word "Canaanite" in Hebrew means merchant. There never was a Canaanite in the temple. The Jews would never allow a Gentile into the inner courts of the temple. And so this does not mean a literal Canaanite or Gentile but rather a merchant. The Canaanite of Zechariah's prophecy is not a Gentile but a Jew.

The Jews had turned the temple of God into a place of buying and selling, not just doves and sheep and oxen, but the souls of men.

The Pharisee was a merchant who dealt in the bad coin of human merit for which he sought to obtain divine favor. The whole of Judaism was given over to Canaanitism. The prophecy is spiritual and not literal!

Charles Alexander

**18 So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"**

**19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."**

**20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"**

**21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.**

There is a second prophecy that was related to the cleansing of the temple:

***"Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."***

This is Psalm 69:9. If the Jews had known their Messiah they would not have asked for proof of His authority [18].

It was the temple of His body and His power to be raised from the dead that He compares with the temple. Ever the literalist the Jews were incredulous that he could raise the literal temple in three day that had taken 46 years to build. The same literal bias affects those who proclaim a literal future Jewish kingdom on earth to displace the invisible kingdom of Christ and render obsolete the New Covenant. Charles Alexander

We see Christ in absolute control. He calls whom He will, those whom He has known from before the foundation of the world. He declares that He is the great omniscient "come and see" of Psalm 46.

He shows to Nathanael that He is the revealer of all the things of God. He is the One who opens heaven and restores communication between God and man by His own atoning and reconciling work.

He openly declares the new covenant and fulfills all that Moses and the prophets and the Psalms said about Him and requires that all obedience be rendered to Himself: ***"Whatever He says to you, do it."***

He shows in the cleansing of the temple that He is the fulfillment of all prophecy as He drives out the merchants and false Judaism from the temple. At the same time, for those who can receive it, He is the temple.

We cannot know how the Holy Spirit works as He convicts a person of sin and uses the law to give the knowledge of sin. But, praise God, when He does, that person will then see that Jesus is the sufficient Savior.

They will despise all of their religious deeds [Pharisaism] and see that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

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