

“A Sign of the New Covenant”  
John 2:1-11  
(Preached at Trinity, April 12, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 2** begins with the Wedding feast at Cana. It is a continuation of **Chapter 1** covering the first week of Christ's public ministry in Galilee.
2. Weddings in the first-century were major events and could last as long as a week. The groom was usually responsible for the expenses of the wedding. In the night of the ceremony the groom and his friends would go to the bride's house and escort her and her attendants to the groom's house.
3. Wine was served to celebrate the wedding. It was a wonderfully joyous occasion
  - A. Jesus was invited and He attended participating in the joyous occasion. When the wine ran out Mary came to Him. His mother knew Him. She had watched Him grow up. He was extraordinary. As He already had at least five disciples she knew a change was happening in His life. Jesus rebuffed her approach knowing His earthly ministry had only just begun.
  - B. He wasn't interested in a public display of His power, but He did have an interest in the situation with this newlywed couple. It is significant that this was the occasion of His first miracle. He demonstrated His gracious concern for this embarrassing situation.
4. We shouldn't overlook the abundance of our Lord's act of changing the water into wine.  
**John 2:6 NAU** - "Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each."
  - a. That's between 120 and 180 gallons. That's a lot of wine!
  - b. And notice the quality of the wine. It was the best of wine.  
**John 2:10 NAU** - "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."
5. But there is something else going on here that we must not miss. John records for us in **Verse 11:**  
**John 2:11 NAU** - "This beginning of *His signs* Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him."  
A sign is something that points to a reality greater than itself. Something is being symbolized in this miracle of changing the water into wine.
6. In **Chapter 1** John has described the failure of Judaism. They did not recognize their Messiah.
  - A. In **Verse 11** we are told they did not receive Him  
**John 1:11 NAU** - "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him."

- B. John points out the ignorance of the Sanhedrin in sending delegates to discover the identity of John.  
**John 1:20 NAU** - "And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."
- C. John the Baptist further declares their ignorance in **Verse 26**  
**John 1:26 NAU** - "John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, *but* among you stands One whom you do not know."
7. All of the ordinances of Judaism were meant to point to Christ. All of the rites; all of the ceremonial practices were designed with the single purpose of pointing to Christ. And now He has arrived and they didn't recognize Him. This shouldn't surprise us. We now have the full revelation of the Gospel and peoples still do not recognize Him and will not receive Him.
8. Now we come to **Chapter 2** and a wedding being held in Cana. Jesus is invited and His mother is there. Upon running out of wine she comes to Him and declares, "They have no wine."  
 The lack of wine paints a picture of the condition of Judaism when Jesus arrived. It had become empty, joyless, meaningless. It was form without substance. Jesus takes the opportunity to perform a miracle and save the day for the newlyweds. But there is more than meets the eye.
9. Jesus purposely tells them to fill the six water pots with water. John makes a point of describing for us the purpose of the water pots. They were for the Jewish custom of purification. They were used for the Jewish ceremonial washing. The practice had become mere form. Jesus would later condemn their empty practice.  
**Mark 7:1-7 NAS** - "And the Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered together around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. <sup>3</sup> (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, *thus* observing the traditions of the elders; <sup>4</sup> and *when they come* from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) <sup>5</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?" <sup>6</sup> And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. <sup>7</sup> 'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'"
10. By changing the ceremonial water to wine Jesus was declaring the passing of the Old Covenant and the arrival of the New Covenant.

- I. The New Covenant is a marvelous transformation
- A. Notice the total transformation of the purpose of the water pots
1. They would no longer be used for cleansing
  2. The water was totally transformed
- B. The New Covenant is a radically different covenant
1. It is intimately connected to the Old Covenant.
    - a. In the Old Covenant there was a progressive unfolding of God's eternal Covenant of Redemption.
    - b. The Old Covenant was an excellent covenant. It set apart God's people as being holy and distinct. It declared the sinfulness of sin and the need of atonement.
    - c. It established the priesthood and displayed the need of mediation.
    - d. But the New Covenant is a better covenant  
**Hebrews 8:13 NAU** - "When He said, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear."
  2. The New Covenant displays the grace of the Gospel transposed upon the curse of the Law  
 Matthew Henry - "The beginning of Moses's miracles was turning water into blood (Ex. 4:9; 7:20), the beginning of Christ's miracles was turning water into wine; which intimates the difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. The curse of the law turns water into blood, common comforts into bitterness and terror; the blessing of the gospel turns water into wine."<sup>1</sup>
  3. The New Covenant is the fulfillment of the Old. But it is radically different – See **Jeremiah 31**  
**Jeremiah 31:31 NAS** - "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah"  
 a. The Old Covenant could be broken  
**Jeremiah 31:32 NAS** - "not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke"  
The New Covenant cannot be broken – it is sealed by the blood of Christ and is founded upon His faithfulness. It is the Covenant of Redemption fulfilled—the Covenant between the Godhead forged in eternity.  
 b. In the Old Covenant the Law was external, written upon stone tablets. It was a taskmaster that demanded perfection. In the New Covenant the Law has been fulfilled by Christ. Jesus kept the Law meeting its demands. The standard of the Law continues but our relationship to the Law has changed. Now it has been written upon our hearts.  
**Jeremiah 31:33 NAS** - "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it"

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1925.

- c. Jesus came to His own but they did not know Him and did not receive Him. The people of the New Covenant universally know their Covenant Head. They are united with Him and His Spirit instructs them.  
**Jeremiah 31:34 NAS** - "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them"
  - d. The people of the New Covenant have been universally and eternally forgiven through the atoning blood of the NC.  
**Jeremiah 31:34 NAS** - "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."
4. We can also see here Jesus Christ as the Lord of the New Covenant
- a. Mary commands the servants:  
**John 2:5 NAU** - "His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."
  - b. God affirmed this at the transfiguration  
**Matthew 17:5 NAU** - "While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" **KJV** – "Hear ye Him"
  - c. Jesus affirmed it of Himself  
**Matthew 24:35 NAU** - "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."  
**Mark 8:38 NAU** - "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."  
**Luke 6:47-48 NAU** - "Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: <sup>48</sup> he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built."  
**John 14:23-24 NAU** - "Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. <sup>24</sup> "He who does not love Me does not keep My words"

## II. It is a joyous change

- A. In the Old Covenant wine was a sometimes used as a symbol of joy  
**Psalm 104:14-15 NAS** - " He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth, <sup>15</sup> And wine which makes man's heart glad"  
**Ecclesiastes 10:19 NAS** - "*Men* prepare a meal for enjoyment, and wine makes life merry, and money is the answer to everything."  
**Judges 9:13 NAS** - "But the vine said to them, 'Shall I leave my new wine, which cheers God and men, and go to wave over the trees?'"
1. But Judaism had ceased to minister joy to the people. It had degenerated into a cold, lifeless religion—nothing but mechanical routine.
  2. Mere religion is always in danger of becoming mere form with no life or joy. Only Christ can bring true joy.
- B. The New Covenant is a joyous change
1. The New Testament continually holds joy before us
    - a. The fruit of the Spirit is “Love, Joy, and Peace . . .”
    - b. Jesus stressed this fullness of joy  
**John 15:11 NAS** - "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full."  
**John 16:24 NAS** - "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full."
    - c. Peter spoke of this joy  
**1 Peter 1:8 NAS** - "and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory"
    - d. Paul put it in the form of a command  
**Philippians 4:4 NAS** - "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"
  2. In Christ we have abundance  
**John 10:10 NAU** - "I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly."  
    - a. I brought to our attention last time that these waterpots would have held between 120-180 gallons – an abundant supply.
    - b. We also saw last time the richness of the wine that had replaced the water. It was the best wine and it flowed in abundance  
**John 2:10 NAU** - "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."
    - c. The Old Covenant could only prepare the way. It could only point to the New. Jesus is the fullness.  
**John 2:10 NAU** - "you have kept the good wine until now."

**Conclusion:**

1. The coming of Christ was the arrival of the great expectation. He was the promised Messiah. He is the fulfillment of God's eternal Covenant of Redemption.
2. It is God's glorious purpose for the salvation of His elect people.
3. Are you a partaker of the New Covenant?

John wrote in **Chapter 1**.

**John 1:11-12 NAU** - "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup> But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name"

We'll read in **Chapter 3**

**John 3:15-16 NAU** - "whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. <sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."