

## John 2:1-25 Water Into Wine & Temple Cleansing

### Review:

**Purpose:** John wrote his Gospel as an evangelistic tract for Jewish unbelievers who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire (Hellenistic Jews). It was not written *to us*, but it is recorded *for us*.

ESV **John 20:30-31** . . . these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

**Focus:** The key question of John's Gospel concerns the question, *Who is Jesus?*<sup>1</sup>

**Application:** The key application of John's Gospel is for you to believe in Jesus, so that you too may have life.

### Jesus First Sign (ssshhh—It's a secret!)

**Introduction: What function do highway signs serve?** Road signs give traveler information, such as the route number, mileage to certain place, arrival at a city, the speed limit, etc. In a similar way, Jesus did supernatural things as signs that pointed His true identity (the Messiah; God in human form). In this chapter we will learn about His first sign meant to strengthen His new disciples' faith.

\*\*\*\***What problem was brought to Jesus' attention (2:1-5)?** There was no wine left. To run out of wine at a first-century Jewish wedding was a crushing social embarrassment.<sup>2</sup>

**Wedding (2:1):** God created marriage in the beginning, in the Garden of Eden. That Jesus graced a wedding with His presence suggests He approved of weddings.<sup>3</sup>

**Mother of Jesus (2:1):** John did not even name Jesus' mother. This is surprising in light of the veneration given to her in Catholicism. In contrast, John assumes his readers were already familiar with Peter's name (1:40, but not Mary's name).

That Jesus' father is absent suggests that he was deceased. Further evidence for his demise can be seen in the fact that Jesus was known as a carpenter, not a carpenter's son.

If you were at a wedding and were told the wine had run out, you might say, "Let's get some punch instead." Jesus' response was, "Woman, what does that have to do with me?" **What does Jesus' reply (2:4) tell you about the intent behind His mother's no wine comment (2:3)?** She wanted Jesus to do something about it. She obviously already knew that He had supernatural abilities. Moreover, maybe she was trying to push Jesus into a major public miracle so that He would go ahead and publically demonstrate His true identity.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D.A. Carson, *John*, 95.

<sup>2</sup> Carson, *John*, 169.

<sup>3</sup> Cana was a city in Galilee.

<sup>4</sup> It is likely she was an assistant at the wedding; notice how she had the authority to direct the servants to do whatever Jesus said to do (2:5).

**Woman (2:4):** That Jesus called His mother “woman” was probably a term of polite distance, a response of measured rebuke. He was not merely her biological son. He also was the Son of God, sent by the Father on a mission. Even Mary had to learn that she had no inside track to Jesus. Jesus, as the Son of God, made it clear that He was totally free of any kind of human agenda or manipulation.<sup>5</sup> The mother-son relationship was replaced by the believer-Savior relationship.<sup>6</sup> Catholicism teaches that if you can get Mary to ask Jesus something on your behalf, He is more likely to grant your request; that was not true at this wedding and it is not true now.

**My Hour (2:4): What “hour” had not yet come for Jesus (2:4)?** John did not explain it for his readers, perhaps purposely in order to build suspense as this same word (“hour”) is developed throughout the rest of the Gospel, where it usually refers to his death on the cross and subsequent resurrection.<sup>7 8</sup> On the other hand, it was common in Jewish thinking that when the Messiah came, there would be abundant wine (a sign of God’s blessing); Jesus may have been telling his mother it was not yet time for that.<sup>9</sup> For example:

ESV **Isaiah 25:6** On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

**It’s About Time:** In any event, it clearly shows that Jesus was a man with a plan, every detail of which had been carefully timed by eternal decree.<sup>10</sup>

**Do whatever he tells you (2:5):** Despite the mild rebuke, Jesus’ mother clearly anticipated that Jesus would do *something* about the wine shortage. Thus Jesus’ negative answer (2:4) did not mean that he would not honor her wishes; it meant that he wouldn’t call public attention to Himself as Messiah.

**Application:** We should all heed Mary’s instructions to the servants: “Do whatever he tells you.”

ESV **Matthew 7:21** Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

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**\*\*\*How did Jesus quietly strengthen his disciples’ faith (2:6-12)?** Jesus showed his glory privately to his disciples by miraculously turning water into wine.<sup>11</sup>

**Moses—vs—Jesus:** Moses turned water into blood in a act of judgment. Jesus turned water into wine in an act of grace. That He turned water into wine at the wedding shows that Jesus was not an ascetic.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Carson, *John*, 171.

<sup>6</sup> Hendriksen, *John*, 119.

<sup>7</sup> Carson, *John*, 171.

<sup>8</sup> Dennis & Grudem, *ESV Study*, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Carson, *John*, 172.

<sup>10</sup> Hendriksen, *John*, 115.

<sup>11</sup> It is generally thought that the third day refers to the third day after calling Nathanael.

<sup>12</sup> Hendriksen, *John*, 114.

ESV **Matthew 11:19** The Son of Man came eating and drinking . . .

**Six stone jars (2:6): Based on 2:6, how many total gallons of water did the jars hold?** Each of the six jars held, on average, twenty-five gallons;  $25 \times 6 = 150$  gallons. That would have been some big wedding to need that much more wine! Actually, however, the Greek suggests that the water became wine as each bucketful was drawn out by the servants (rather than that all the water turned to wine while still in the six jars).<sup>13</sup>

**Water into wine (2:7-10): Who knew about this miracle (2:7-10)?** Notice how slyly John introduced this miracle to his readers; the miracle was just slipped into the narrative (*reread* 2:9). This may be been to help the reader appreciate the quiet nature of this miracle. Apart from Jesus' mother and the disciples, only the servants knew about it.

**Good Wine (2:10):** The master of the feast, an unbiased judge, declared the miracle wine to be "good" wine—so good, in fact, that it made the first batch of wine seem like poor wine. **Why did John's readers need to know this information?** John may have recorded the master's reaction to show that this was a genuine miracle and not some trick illusion by a magician. It was real wine. That the jars were filled to the brim with water shows there was no room for someone to have added wine into the existing water.<sup>14</sup>

### Secondary Applications:

a) God often saves the best for last.<sup>15</sup>

ESV **Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

ESV **1 Corinthians 2:9** "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"

b) The Jews associated wine and weddings with joy, celebration and God's blessing. Jesus was not a cosmic kill joy. He didn't say, "They've had enough wine, let them drink water." Instead, He made them good wine, and a lot of it. "Drawing" (pun intended) a spiritual lesson from this:

ESV **John 10:10b** I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

ESV **John 15:11** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

**First Sign (2:11): John declared this to be the first of Jesus' signs. It was literally a sign of the times! However, how can 2:11 be reconciled with 2:4?** Ordinarily, a sign, such a street sign, serves to inform people of something ("Austin City Limits") or to point them in the right direction. This sign pointed to the fact that Jesus was the Christ, but it was *a sign meant only for His disciples*. It was not done in public. It was a secret sign.

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<sup>13</sup> Hendriksen, *John*, 116.

<sup>14</sup> Steven J. Cole, "Lesson 10: The Joyous Salvation That Jesus Brings (John 2:1-11)", Bible.org. Accessed April 18, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Cole, "Lesson 10".

**Manifested His glory (2:11):** Glory (2:11) is from *doxa* (“doxology”) and fundamentally meant “brightness, spender, radiance” (such as the glory of the sun). From that, the idea of glory was widened to denote majesty, power and might. The glory manifested concerned Jesus’ true identity as the Messiah and as God in human form.

ESV **John 1:14** the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory . . .

**Literary Purpose:** John’s purpose in recounting the wine miracle is in keeping with his purpose in writing:

ESV **John 20:30-31** . . . these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

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**\*\*\*\*Where did Jesus hang out after the wedding (1:21)?** After the wedding, Jesus went down from the hill country of Cana to the coastal city of Capernaum (in Galilee) for several days, along with his mother, his physical brothers, and his disciples.<sup>16</sup> This is a transitional verse, a bridge, to the next chapter.

**Mary’s Virginity:** Catholicism teaches that Mary remained a perpetual virgin. However, the mention of Jesus’ “brothers” mitigates against this dogma.

### Jesus the Bouncer

*Rhetorical:* **Have you ever thought of Jesus as a bouncer?** That’s in essence what we see him doing next. Steven Cole asks, “Does Jesus wielding a whip fit your image of Him? Why is it crucial to know Jesus as the Bible reveals Him, not necessarily as we might want Him to be?”<sup>17</sup>

**\*\*\*\*Why did Jesus drive a livestock market and moneychangers out of the temple (2:13-17)?** Jesus drove them out because they had turned the temple into a market/business center (2:16).<sup>18</sup>

**A person coming to worship was required to offer the types of animals that Jesus drove out (oxen, sheep, and pigeons). What was wrong with selling these animals to those who needed them (2:14-16) as a service?** The problem stated by Jesus in 2:16 was that of location. This livestock market had previously been across the valley on the Mount of Olives.<sup>19</sup> Jesus considered it wrong to do business inside the temple complex. This may have been because the market was set up in the outer court called the Court of the Gentiles, thus disrupting the worship of God-fearing Gentiles.<sup>20</sup> So, instead of quiet dignity and prayer, there was commerce, bad smells, and farm-yard noises.

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<sup>16</sup> Verses such as this tend to undermine the Catholic doctrine of Mary’s perpetual virginity.

<sup>17</sup> Cole, *Lessons*.

<sup>18</sup> Nothing is stated here about any dishonesty on their part.

<sup>19</sup> Carson, *John*, 178.

<sup>20</sup> Dennis & Grudem, *ESV Study*, 2023.

**Passover (2:13):** Jesus left Capernaum (2:12) and traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. The year is thought to have been A.D. 28.<sup>21</sup> This annual feast was prescribed by Moses to commemorate the Israelites' exodus from Egyptian slavery. It is so named because the final plague, wherein the angel of death *passed over* the homes of the Israelites, killing the first born of the Egyptians.

**“Up” to Jerusalem (2:13):** Capernaum was on the Sea of Galilee, which was 680 feet below sea level. Jerusalem is 2500 feet above sea level. Thus Jesus went “up” to Jerusalem.

**The temple (2:14):** Solomon's temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. A much smaller one was later built to replace it in the time of Ezra. Ezra's temple was later torn down to make way for a much grander building. This third temple was financed by a local despot, Herod the Great. This temple was destroyed in war by the Roman legions in A.D. 70. All that is left of it today is the “wailing wall”, an outer retaining wall of the temple complex.

**Money-changers (2:14):** The temple tax could only be paid in coins minted by the city of Tyre (due to the high purity of its silver). These money-changers provided a necessary service, along with those who sold animals for sacrifice.

**Made a Whip (2:15):** His actions in the temple were not a sudden, unexpected outburst of anger. Jesus took the time to fashion a whip. It was a well thought-through, pre-meditated, calculated, planned action.

**Why didn't the business men fight back?** Some of them may have tried to stop Him, but the element of surprise, His zeal (2:17), and the whip gave Jesus the advantage.

**There was a temple police force, made up of Levitical guards. Why hadn't the police already evicted these tradesmen (2:13-16)?** The temple leadership obviously approved of the commercial activity that was going on there.

**What indication of Jesus' true identity was expressed in 2:16?** Jesus spoke of “My” Father's house (2:16), not “our” Father's house. It was unusual for a first-century Jew to refer to God as “my” Father. It suggested a very close, special, messianic relationship with the Father.

**It was written (2:17):** When the disciples saw what Jesus did, they remembered of Psalm 69:9. **Did Jesus fulfill Psalm 69:9 or did the disciples merely see a parallel between Jesus and the Psalmist's sentiments?**

**ESV Psalm 69:9** For zeal for your house has consumed me . . .

**Zeal/Consume (2:17):** Zeal is a strong desire to do something; it has to do with enthusiasm. To consume something is to use it up. We consume food. Homework consumes time. Zeal for the purity of God's house consumed Jesus.

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<sup>21</sup> Carson, *John*, 176.

**First conversion, then cleansing:** First we saw Jesus convert water into wine, then we saw Him cleanse the temple. If we made this into an allegory, we might observe that first Jesus converts a person (causes him to be born again), then He cleanses him from his sins through repentance (sanctification; outward holiness).

ESV **Hebrews 12:6** For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

ESV **Hebrews 12:11** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

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**What is a vigilante?** A vigilante is someone who takes the law into his own hands.

\*\*\*\***What did “the Jews” demand from Jesus (2:18-22)?** Understandably, they wanted some sign of His authority to cleanse the temple. An ordinary citizen would have no right to presume to cleanse the temple. Also, that they requested a sign suggests they had at least a suspicion that Jesus may have been sent from God in some capacity.<sup>22</sup>

**Vigilante:** Jesus was not a vigilante because He was the Lord over the temple:

ESV **Hebrews 3:2-6b** . . . Moses . . . was faithful in all God's house . . . Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant . . . but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.

**Truth:** As Lord of the temple, Jesus had the authority to clean house:

Jesus' actions were reminiscent of:

ESV **Malachi 3:1ff** . . . the Lord<sup>23</sup> whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple . . .

**The Jews (2:18):** “The Jews” usually (but not always) in John’s Gospel refers to the spiritual leadership of Israel that ultimately decided against Jesus.

**What sign did Jesus offer to prove His authority (2:19, 21)?** The ultimate sign He offered was His own resurrection from the dead three days after being killed. Jesus supernaturally knew that He would be killed and then rise from the dead after three days.

**“I” will raise it up (2:19):** Jesus Himself (“I”) actively played a role in His own resurrection.

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<sup>22</sup> Carson, *John*, 181.

<sup>23</sup> *adoni*

ESV **John 10:17-18** . . . I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.

ESV **John 11:25** I am the resurrection and the life.

**How did “the Jews” misunderstand Jesus (2:20)?** They quite understandably thought Jesus meant the literal temple that He had just cleansed. His own disciples even thought that’s what he meant.

**Forty-six years (2:20):** Naturally, they thought Jesus insane to claim He could rebuild in three days something that took forty-six years to build.<sup>24</sup>

**Why would Jesus allow himself to be misunderstood (2:20)?** He wanted to be misunderstood. He was purposely vague, uttering a statement calculated to create misunderstanding. His statement was “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.”<sup>25</sup> His goal was to plant a seed that would bear fruit for faith in the disciples after He had died (2:22). He did this to cause them to remember his strange words so that three years later His true meaning would dawn on them and their faith would be strengthened. Besides, He knew that “the Jews” (the leadership) were not going to believe in him, even if he had been clear.

ESV **Matthew 13:13** This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

**They believed (2:22):** John informs us that after His death and resurrection, Jesus’ disciples did indeed believe the word that Jesus had spoken. It was mission accomplished! Just as their faith was strengthened when Jesus turned the water in to wine, so too it was strengthened after His resurrection when they remembered this incident.

John recorded that they also believed “the Scripture” (2:22). This is evidently a reference to the various Old Testament Scriptures that dealt with the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

ESV **Romans 10:9** . . . if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

**True Temple:** Jesus cleansed the physical temple, which was destroyed in A.D. 70 and never rebuilt. Ironically, it was the unbelieving Jews themselves who were responsible for its destruction, for in rejecting Jesus they brought down God’s judgment on themselves.

Now, God’s true temple is his church:

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<sup>24</sup> The Greek could be taken to mean that the temple had been completed forty-six years previous, not that it took forty-six years to complete (Dennis & Grudem, *ESV Study*, 2024).

<sup>25</sup> Winston Churchill, “riddle wrapped up in an enigma”, [en.wiktionary.org](http://en.wiktionary.org). Accessed April 12, 2019.

ESV **Ephesians 2:19-22** . . . the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

ESV **1 Peter 2:4-6** As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

Jesus had authority over the temple and so cleansed it from unholy activities.

*"What would Jesus do if He visited our church?*

*Would He be pleased with our worship?*

*Would He smile as He looked at our relationships?*

*Would He approve of our heart for the lost?*

*Would He commend our giving and the way that we use the church's funds?*

*Would He say that our prayer life reflects our total dependence on Him?"<sup>26</sup>*

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### Summary Paragraph

\*\*\*\***What response was there to Jesus' signs (2:23-25)?** When they saw the signs Jesus did, many people believed.

**Believed (2:23):** "Believed" is from *pisteuo*. If you believe something, it means that you are persuaded that it is true. I met a Ugandan politician who claimed to have been a pastor at one time, but who had lost his faith. He falsely defined faith as "believing in something that is imaginary." It is possible to believe in something that isn't true, to believe a lie, but his view of faith was defective. There is a difference between faith and proven fact, but our faith in Jesus is based on evidence. It is not a blind leap into the dark, and it certainly is not: "believing in something that is imaginary."

**In His name (2:23):** To believe "in His name" (2:23) means you accept, you are persuaded of, who Jesus is claiming to be: The Messiah.

NIV **John 8:24** . . . if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.

**Review:** A uniformed policeman obviously represents the law. It is not so immediately obvious that plainclothes detective represents the law, so he might say, "Stop, in the name of the law". The law has no name. What he means is, "I have the authority to order you to stop because I am an officer of the law."

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<sup>26</sup> Cole, *Lessons*.



**Signs (2:23): The water into wine sign was kept secret (2:1-12). Why now did Jesus begin to do signs that were more public (2:23)?** Perhaps the countdown to the “hour” (2:4) had come!

**What problem was there with “all people” (2:24, and with “man” in 2:25), that caused Jesus not to trust them?** Mankind generally has a poor credit rating with God. There is something that is not quite right about people in general. In this case, their faith was spurious. It was faith that would have fizzled before the finish. That Jesus knew this about them is another indication that He was the Messiah. Mostly likely, they wanted a political Messiah who would rule as king. They would have imposed their agenda on Jesus.

**Entrust (2:24-25):** “Entrust” (2:24) is from *pisteuo*, the same Greek word translated “believed” in 2:23. They believed in Jesus, but Jesus did not believe in them!

Once again, this showed Jesus’ spiritual x-ray vision; a quality usually reserved only for God.

ESV **Jeremiah 17:10** I the LORD search the heart and test the mind . . .

**Application:** Not all faith is a saving faith:

ESV **James 2:19** You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

### **So What?**

**John’s main purpose in writing these things was so that we might believe in Jesus in such a way that we have life in His name. Based on this chapter, who is Jesus?** Jesus is the Christ. His mother could not deter Him from the Father’s business. “The Jews” could not deter Him from His Father’s business. His new fans could not deter Him from His Father’s business. The ultimate sign of this was His resurrection from the dead after three days.

You can hear this lesson being taught at [SermonAudio.com/NTRF](http://SermonAudio.com/NTRF).

Stephen E. Atkerson NTRF.org 04/12/19