

Jesus attended a wedding in Cana and helped the family of the groom avoid the embarrassment of a social faux pas. But Jesus' simple act of kindness was much more—it was a sign. Soon after this, Jesus railed against corruption in the temple. But it was no mere protest against obvious injustice; one prophecy was fulfilled and another announced.

## — 2:1-2 —

Scholars have scratched their heads for years over the opening words of this episode in Jesus' ministry: "On the third day . . ." The third day in connection with what? It can't be the third chronological day in John's narrative. Four days have already elapsed:

- Day 1 – The religious leaders confront John the Baptizer (1:19-28).
- Day 2 – John the Baptizer identifies Jesus as the Messiah (1:29-34).
- Day 3 – Andrew and John (the apostle) begin following Jesus (1:35-42).
- Day 4 – Peter, Philip, and Nathanael are found (1:43-51).

"On the third day" most likely means on the third day after the events of 1:45-51, after He had "purposed to go to Galilee." Or perhaps this was the third day after His arrival in Galilee. Regardless, Jesus was again in the region of His upbringing. Cana was about four miles from Nazareth, and this was quite likely the wedding of a close family member. This would explain His mother's proactive role at the feast.

Weddings in those days were different than they are today in the West. Marriages in the ancient Near East were arranged by the parents, a contract was prepared, vows were spoken in the synagogue, tokens were exchanged, and then the man and woman returned to their respective homes. Although legally considered married, they lived apart during a betrothal period, which lasted no less than two months and could be as long as a year.

At the end of the waiting period, the groom would take to the streets with his friends, usually at night, in a torch-lit procession from his home to the bride's in a grand parade accompanied by pomp and color and singing. After speeches of goodwill and blessings pronounced over the couple, the groom took his bride home, where family and friends feasted for as long as a week. The groom's family was expected to provide enough food and drink for everyone.

## — 2:3-4 —

At this particular wedding feast, the family hadn't planned very well. They didn't have enough wine to serve their guests the entire time,



which was a major breach of etiquette. To this day in the East, hospitality is considered a sacred duty and, in some cases, a cause for legal action if withheld! Something needed to be done, so Mary turned to her son for help.

Three words or phrases need explanation, mostly because the language and culture is foreign and could lead to misinterpretation.

*"Woman..."* To all husbands and sons: I encourage you to avoid this term of address. It doesn't go over well in English. In the culture of first-century Galilee, however, it was very polite, much like addressing a woman as "Ma'am."

*"What does that have to do with us?"* The Greek behind this phrase is based on a Semitic expression, literally, "What to me and to you?" It can be a sharp rebuke (Judg. 11:12; 2 Sam. 16:10; 1 Kgs. 17:18; 2 Chr. 35:21) or a gentle request to be left out of a matter (2 Kgs. 3:13; Hos. 14:8).

*"My hour has not yet come."* Jesus made several references to His "hour" or His "time." Five times He says the time has not yet come (2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20); three times He declares that the time has come (12:23; 13:1; 17:1). These expressions are always references to the time of His glorification.

Those who accepted Jesus as the Christ were correct to anticipate that the promised King would receive God's glory and then bring glory to the nation (e.g., Isa. 60). Just how that was to happen was poorly understood by everyone but Jesus. This conflicting expectation appears frequently throughout John's narrative, beginning with this incident just days after John the Baptizer officially announced the identity of the Christ.

Mary knew before anyone else that her son was the Messiah. For years, she and Joseph endured scorn and ridicule and misunderstanding for apparently conceiving Jesus during their betrothal. For decades, she waited patiently to share her wonderful secret with the world. It's likely she saw the present crisis as a perfect opportunity for Jesus to burst onto the political scene, stir the people to action, and begin His campaign to claim the throne of David.

Jesus' response clarified three misconceptions. First, the Messiah's glory would come at the expense of His death, not as the result of a dazzling show of power. Second, the Messiah's glory would come from



God, not from people. And third, the Messiah's glory would take place on the Father's timetable, not anyone else's.

Mary may not have understood the full significance of her son's correction, but she got the message: He knows His destiny, and He's in charge.

### — 2:6-10 —

The fact that Jesus did act and that it was by supernatural means tells us that He didn't object to His mother's request. Having addressed her misguided motivation, He delighted to help the host family. He instructed the servants to fill six stone water jars, each of which held 18-27 gallons (80-120 liters). This would provide more than 150 gallons (580 liters) of wine. That's enough for 2400 one-cup servings.

Turning water into wine was, by this time in history, a clichéd, sleight-of-hand parlor trick. Today, it would be like pulling a rabbit out of a top hat. Conjurers in pagan temples used special pitchers with hidden chambers to create the illusion of pouring either water or wine at will. I see Jesus revealing His sense of humor in choosing to solve the family's problem by actually doing what others could merely simulate.

#### SEVEN "SIGNS" OF THE SON OF GOD

Sign	Reference	Description	Sign	Significance
1	2:1-11	Turned water into wine	Power over shame	Jesus is the source of life.
2	4:46-54	Healed royal official's son	Power over distance	Jesus is the giver of grace.
3	5:1-17	Healed infirm man by the Pool of Bethesda	Power over disease	Jesus is the giver of grace.
4	6:1-14	Fed a hungry multitude	Power over insufficiency	Jesus is the Word of God.
5	6:15-21	Walked on the Sea of Galilee and calmed a storm	Power over nature	Jesus is the Creator.
6	9:1-41	Gave sight to a man born blind	Power over sin	Jesus is the Truth.
7	11:17-45	Raised Lazarus from the dead	Power over death	Jesus is the hope of resurrection.



He left no room for trickery. While he stood back—perhaps even while reclining at table in the other room—the servants handled the jars, fetched the water, and drew the sample. Then, somewhere between the jars and the wedding coordinator, the miraculous transformation took place.

Note that the provision of wine was abundant and the quality of the wine was excellent. Take note of the Lord's motivation as well: This was a simple act of kindness done for the sake of love for His friends. He didn't make this a sideshow spectacle. In fact, it appears the only people who knew about it were those who had already believed in Him as the Christ. The "headwaiter" didn't even know what had happened.

### **— 2:11-12 —**

John concludes the vignette with a comment and a transition to the next scene. He calls this miracle of Jesus the first of many "signs." The supernatural display of power attested to His identity as God. Moreover, it was symbolic of what He had come to do: to transform all who believe in Him. While the time for Jesus' "glory" had not come, His disciples witnessed it nonetheless. And their faith was strengthened as a result.

Afterward, Jesus and His disciples—five of them at this point—enjoyed a time of family reunion in Capernaum, roughly 18 miles northeast of Cana. Because Joseph is not mentioned by any Gospel after Jesus' twelfth year (Luke 2:41-52), most interpreters conclude that he had died. Mary probably lived with one of Jesus' half-brothers.

### **— 2:13-14 —**

An unknown period of time had gone by; we have no way of knowing how long. Unlike Luke, whose chronicle reads more like a traditional history—chronological and event-driven—John's narrative is more philosophical and driven by a central theological purpose: to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. Therefore, some episodes appear out of chronological order, organized by topic rather than by time or place.

In John's Gospel, the Feast of Passover is a signpost along the journey through Jesus' life, and it plays a crucial role in the narrative. Earlier, John the Baptizer called Jesus "the Lamb of God" (1:29, 36). John does not use the term again, but he does use symbolism to identify Jesus as the true sacrificial lamb and the ultimate fulfillment of the Passover festival.

Passover goes back to the time in Egypt when Moses was given instructions to prepare a lamb a certain way and to honor the Lord's