

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 36:5-10

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

Wedding at Cana  
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## YOU HAVE KEPT THE GOOD WINE UNTIL NOW

John's gospel describes the miracle at Cana, where Jesus changed water into wine, as "The first of his signs," meaning this was the first of many occasions where people witnessed events that compelled them to believe Jesus is the Son of God.

Since the gospel was written, Christians throughout the ages have seen "signs" in this event that are beneath the surface, yet important and significant. Our purpose today is to read once again John's account of the wedding, discuss its significance, and interpret its meaning for us in our time.

John 2:1-11. *On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; <sup>2</sup>Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. <sup>3</sup>When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup>And Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup>Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup>He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast." So they took it. <sup>9</sup>When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup>and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." <sup>11</sup>This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*<sup>1</sup>

- *On the third day ...* (v.1). John was specific about the passage of time in this part of the gospel. Using verses 1:29, 1:36, and 1:43, note that this event at Cana took place near the beginning of our Lord's ministry.
- *... there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee ...* (v.1). *Cana* was a village about ten miles north of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up in his family. In those days, a marriage celebration usually lasted several days.
- *... and the mother of Jesus was there* (v.1). Early writings say Mary was an honored guest, related to someone in the wedding party, which would explain her telling the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Mary wouldn't be giving orders unless the servants came to her and asked. Jesus and his disciples also may have been included in the party simply because he was in Mary's family. But after the wedding, Cana would be known forever as the place where Jesus came and turned water into wine.

This is the only place in John's gospel where Mary is part of the story until we come to the crucifixion, where Jesus said to John, "Behold, your mother!" (John 19:27), and John took Mary to his home. John always referred to Mary as *the mother of Jesus* rather than by name. Discuss possible reasons for this.

- *The mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine"* (v.3). Hospitality was a sacred duty in those days. Jesus was going to turn an embarrassing and uncomfortable situation into an occasion the host would always remember with great pride and joy. Have you seen him do this with any situation in your own life?

The ensuing conversation (v.4 in particular) is hard to understand in our culture. Different translators of the Bible have tried to show that Jesus was not harsh with his mother. For example,

<sup>1</sup> Bible quotations are from the RSV unless otherwise specified.

RSV (literal)

NLT (paraphrase)

Mary (v.3):	“They have no wine.”	“They have no more wine.”
Jesus: (v.4):	“O woman, what have you to do with me?” “My hour has not yet come.”	“Dear woman, that’s not our problem,” “My time has not yet come.”
Mary to servants (v.5):	“Do whatever he tells you.”	“Do whatever he tells you.”

There is diversity in these and other translations because the more literal translation (RSV) sounds harsh where it was not meant to be. It is a touching and significant testimony to the power of the Holy Spirit that believers have always known Jesus loved his mother and spoke kindly to her. It is also clear that Mary knew what her Son could do, and mothers like to coach their children. Besides, it was Mary who ordered the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” You could say Mary had an essential part in this miracle.

- “My hour has not yet come” (v.4). His *hour* would be the time of his crucifixion. See John 12:23 and 17:1 and Matt 26:18 and 45, for example. In other words, Jesus *knew*. He chose his life. He did these great signs so people would believe in him, never for his own benefit. He did them not for himself, but for you and me.
- Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast” (v.7, 8). Thus the miracle took place, and it was obvious to the host and all the guests. Suddenly there were well over a hundred gallons of the best wine they had ever tasted – plenty for everyone. Discuss things Christians have seen in this first great sign of Jesus:

1. Jesus *manifested his glory* in this miracle (v.11). He came to the wedding as the son of Joseph and Mary; he left with many, including his disciples, believing he could be Messiah – the Son of God.
2. Jesus chose a *wedding* for his *first* miracle – one of the happiest times people enjoy in any age – a time when the bride, in the presence of God, joins her life to her husband’s, and everyone celebrates. The bride’s life will never be the same again. Neither will yours, when you receive Christ into your heart.  
The Bible says the bride and groom become *one flesh*. Paul wrote, “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32, NIV). John the Baptist called himself *the friend of the bridegroom* (John 3:29). The Bible also reveals the final redemption of the church in this way (Rev 19:6-7).
3. The *six stone jars* (v.6) held water for *the Jewish rites of purification*. *Seven* represents completion, but there were only *six* jars. “Rites of purification” represent your own attempts at cleansing, which cannot complete the job. Something more is needed to cleanse your soul from sin and make you really pure.
4. Some have associated this sign with the Last Supper, where Jesus took the cup and said, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many” (Mark 14:24). Our Lord thus associated wine with his blood, which *cleanses us from all sin* (1 John 1:9).

But at Cana, the sign was one of joy and celebration. It pointed mainly beyond the cross to a time of redemption in the kingdom of God. It pointed to the *new birth* Jesus would describe to Nicodemus in John 3.

The sign also points to times in your life here and now. One thing we can note in the life of Jesus: When he did one of these great signs, he kept on doing things like it. Jesus did many things to bring joy and excitement into many lives, and all these were *signs*. He made sick people well. He fed thousands, both in body and spirit. He restored dead loved ones to life. He did all these signs, and he has never stopped doing them. He does them every day. You only have to look. Paul wrote, “If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come” (2 Cor 5:17). Have you noticed this? Your new life in Christ is a *sign*. Think of the *signs* Jesus has given, that you have witnessed in yourself.

5. Finally, the steward remarked to the bridegroom, “You have kept the good wine until now” (v.10). When Christ was received as a guest at Cana, the wedding became a joyous celebration. This same miracle that took place at Cana is repeated every day in millions of lives. When we receive Christ, we see things we never saw. The water is still there, the same as it was. After all, water is the main ingredient in wine. But the *new creation* is very different. Like the water changed to wine, you become something you never were. New ingredients are created and added, and your life is no longer as it used to be. As the steward of the feast said to the bridegroom, you and I may likewise say to Jesus, “You have kept the good wine until now!”