

# The First Miracle of Jesus

## John 2:1-11

This first miracle is one of eight found in the book of John. Almost all of them is tied to a teaching or discourse but this one is not! This miracle is placed within the sequence of the first days of Jesus' ministry.

Cana was a small, blue-collar town in Galilee, yet it was here God chose to have Jesus do his first miracle. This was not a spectacular event, those will come, only a few servants, His new followers, and His mother knew of it. But the final results were much more than supplying for the wedding feast!

**“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: <sup>2</sup>And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. John 2:1-2**

### I. Jesus the Guest

- A. A Jewish Wedding – The culture and traditions of weddings are different all over the world, but through the ages, in every culture, and almost without exception, the making of a new home was always noted and celebrated! At the time of Christ, the Jews had their own set of procedures and events in establishing a new family. Jesus will use some of these well-known Jewish traditions in His parables and teachings.

Order of Events – 1) Betrothal – engagement period – lasted up to one year It was a time of preparation for both the groom and bride 2) Grooms coming for the bride – He comes to take his bride to his home. final commitment ceremony before family and close friends; a private dinner 3) Feast (Celebration) - the next day, relatives, friends, and neighbors would gather to celebrate the newly married couple. It could last up to a week, depending on the distance some may have traveled. Food and lodging was supplied. In most cases, food and wine was set out all day, but in the evenings all would gather for a meal.

Responsible Party – The groom was responsible for the arrangements and cost. He would have hired cooks, extra servants, a venue, housing for out-of-town guests, and a manager to handle the details! Understand, the events' success fell on the groom's shoulders. The comfort and provision for the guests was taken very seriously, and it would be a great embarrassment to fail in this area!

THIS WAS THE SETTING OF JESUS' FIRST MIRACLE!

- B. Mary – One question I often saw discussed in my reading was whose wedding this might have been. A normal guest would not have known what was going on in the kitchen! Mary's knowledge sets her apart as intimately involved with the details of the celebration. Some thought she might have been helping with the serving, others felt she was close to the family. I want to take it a bit farther, I wonder if it wasn't one of her daughters or even a son's wedding celebration. Consider these facts: Mary was old enough herself to have children of marrying age, knew of the problem of no wine, seemed to have authority over the servants, and Jesus along with His new friends were invited. Notice, Mary's name is never given. Matter of fact, John will never name Mary by name. In his book, she will only be known as Jesus' mother.
- C. Jesus and His Disciples – The wedding feast invitation was really very liberal. Whole villages were invited to come in and enjoy. It was not unusual that even strangers participate. It states plainly that Jesus was invited along with his new five disciples.

**“<sup>3</sup>And when they wanted (Gk - ”ran out of”) wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. <sup>4</sup>Jesus saith unto her, Woman ( Gk - ”Madam ) , what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. <sup>5</sup> His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” John 2:3-5**

## **II. Jesus the Son**

**A. A Jewish Wine** – In Evangelical circles, unfortunately the drinking of alcohol has become a debatable subject. It is my observation those individuals converted out of a lifestyle of regular alcohol consumption are slow to accept that Christ followers are free to drink alcohol. Yet those saved out of families and churches that condemn drinking are now quicker to defend an occasional alcoholic drink. Within these discussions I have heard the argument taken from this event of Christ that even Jesus made wine, so of course it is ok to drink it! This is ridiculous! One of my books said, “The kind of wine which Jesus made is not the kind which is a mocker and, along with strong drink, is raging.” (Proverbs 20:1) So what was this Jewish wine? First of all, what was it not? It was not the strong, high level alcohol God condemns in the book of Proverbs. What this wine was if from the Greek word “oinos” – this is not just grape juice or a generic fruit of the vine – this wine actually has a small amount of alcohol. You see, water was dangerous to drink out of lakes, rivers, ponds, and wells. Even today we must be careful when drinking untreated water. It is because of this, small amounts of alcohol (fermented grape juice) was diluted into water which acted as a natural purifier. Grape juice would ferment after a short time, and this would become the base for this “wine.” After much study of Jewish customs and ancient writings during the period of Christ, Robert Stein, a modern synoptic Gospel scholar, wrote in a 1975 issue of Christianity Today, “The ratio of water might vary, but only barbarians drank it unmixed, and a mixture of wine and water of equal parts was seen as “strong drink” and frowned upon.” WW p. 116 Stein went on to say there are over 15 verses in the Bible that makes a distinction between wine and strong drink. Also, almost all of my study books covered the fact that water to straight fermented juice varied but most said at least 1/3 to 1/10 mix, leaving the alcohol content at about 4-5%. Bring this into context: today’s wine – 12%; Beer – 5%; Benadril Elixir – 14%; Imodium AD – 5.25%; Tylenol Cold Liquid – 7%; Children’s cough – 5% These may bring a smile to realize how much alcohol is in these medicines but remember there is a big difference between a teaspoon and 3-12 oz beers in a relative short time! Another interesting point was Rabbis would never bless unmixed wine. They would demand wine to be mixed to at least 3 to 1 or even 10 to 1! The color and taste would quickly tell the mixture. God fearing Jews would never drink unmixed or even fermented wine mixed 1-1. Lastly, watered down “wine” was a staple in the diet of the Jews at the time of Christ. But there was no drunkenness. Weddings were and should still be a religious (God honoring) event, from beginning to end of the festivities. This was not an “open bar” setting and Jesus providing the beverage! This was a celebration before God and Jesus honored it by making sure no one was embarrassed or left in need.

**B. Mary Tells Jesus of the Problem** – Don’t forget this was the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Just a few weeks earlier Jesus had packed up His carpenter tools for the last time and left His mother’s home. Very probably this was the first time she has seen her son since He left for His baptism in the Jordan River. Jesus was her amazing, always perfect, never sinned son! It seems that Joseph had died earlier leaving her to finish raising and guiding her family alone. Jesus would have been her helpful guide in all things. Every problem she had, He produced the perfect solution. Every issue she faced, Jesus had a clear and thoughtful plan. Every decision she had to make, Jesus had a wise direction to consider. Wow! There is no wonder that on that day, when the wine ran out, and more needed to be had, she went straight to Jesus, the one she had learned to lean on over the years and helper that never let her down. He was perfect! **Mary was not looking for a miracle! She was not trying to manipulate the situation or push her agenda on her Messiah son!** How could she have? Jesus had never done a miracle before, and it was only very recently that He was declared the Messiah. In my opinion, Mary was looking to her resourceful son for a good suggestion to a difficult situation.

C. Jesus' Response – There are three parts to Jesus' response that needs to be understood. But of course, Jesus was not being disrespectful, harsh, or short with His mother. We will find in it Christ's new setting for the relationship between mother and son. This will be something Mary will need to learn as He began His ministry. And it seems, like the disciples, she will not really understand Jesus' mission until after the resurrection!

- “Woman,” – There really is no good way to translate this word into English. Again, we need a collection of words, but even at that, we don't have a good sediment for the emotion, in this term. It is not a close, personal title for one's mother. It is a respectful term for a woman. Translations have, “dear woman” (a little to sentimental) “Mother” (trying to separate from this term) “Woman” (a bit cold and distant) “dear lady” some leave it out altogether. But one that made good sense to me was Madam.
- “what have I to do with thee?” – This is actually a Jewish clique. Other translations are “what do we have in common in this?” “why involve me” “why are you getting me involved with this matter?” Mary probably came to Jesus innocently needing His help, insight, and seeking His assistance. But here Jesus is drawing a line initially saying her needs and problems are not anymore, His first priority. Later in Mark 3, we see Mary and Jesus' brothers coming to where He was preaching and teaching. Again, He will put them off by saying, “Who is my mother, or my brethren?... For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.” Relationships had changed, interaction had changed...no one had the inside tract to Jesus, all had to come to Him as Messiah and Savior.
- “mine hour is not yet come.” – Statements concerning “the hour” of Christ is recorded 7 times in the book of John. Every time it is in relationship to Christ's death and suffering on the cross. We must be consistent with that same thought here. Jesus had a new priority in life; the mission God sent Him into the world to accomplish, the death and suffering of the cross for the sins of the world! Shepard said of this statement, “The reply of Jesus show His mother that her maternal authority had not extended into the realm of His messianic work.” p. 89 **Jesus must be recognized by Mary as her Savior and Lord, not son and household leader.** Interestingly enough, the Roman Catholic church asserts the intervention and intercession of Mary but here Jesus is denying her this position.

The change in relationship must have been very difficult for Mary. But Jesus did not cast her off and forget her. It was on the cross, in the depth of agony for the sins of the world, that Jesus made sure Mary would be cared for by His beloved disciple. She was respected, loved, and remembered. But like any on us, she needed to see her son as the Savior of her soul!

D. Mary's Advice – With all this said, Mary turned to the servants and told them, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” We can be confident to say, Mary did not understand all that Jesus was relaying to her there at the wedding feast. But what she did know, was that her son was worthy to be listened too and obeyed!

DA Carlson said this about verses 4-5. “These two verses, as difficult as they are, help to shape this account of Jesus' first miracle, and ensure that the focus is on Jesus' glory, not on Mary's, and on the disciples' faith, including Mary's.” p. 173

**“<sup>2</sup>And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins ( 1 firkin – 9 gal; 1 pots - 20-30 gal; 6 pots – 120-180 gal ) apiece. <sup>7</sup>Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup>And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. <sup>9</sup>When the**

ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, <sup>10</sup>And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine (superior wine) until now.” John 2:6-10

### III. Jesus the Host

A. A Jewish Purification Water Pot – These six pots were used for only one thing---water for purifying! They were not multipurpose – water today, wine tomorrow, lemonade the next! We should not be surprised by the number and size of these waterpots. A lot of water was used in the purification rituals. This was an important part of Jews daily life and if many were gathered for a longer time of celebration and eating, there would need to be plenty of water available for washing! Jesus will later condemn the Religious Leaders for holding so firmly to these traditions while rejecting the commandments of God. (Mark 7:1-9)

B. Obedient Servants – Mary told the servants to do whatever Jesus said, and they did! Christ gave them three directives – fill – draw - bear

“fill” – Jesus told the servants to fill the pots with water, and I love the fact they not only followed Jesus’ instructions but did it in such a complete fashion as Mary had told them! They filled those six large pots to the “brim!”

“draw” – The Greek word used here is found in other Bible passages to mean “take water from a well.” This leads scholars to believe the servants took water out of those six pots. Remember, these pots could not hold anything but water and it seems that is what they took out of the pots.

“bear” – Jesus told the servants to take the water they drew out to the “governor of the feast” or their boss. The servants must have been somewhat hesitant to take a fresh serving of water to him, but they obeyed Mary’s son Jesus and took it.

C. Surprised Governor/Surprised Servants – And when the governor tasted it, he was certainly surprised by the quality of the wine he drank. The Bible tell us in verse 9, the ruler of the feast “knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew).” Both the Governor and the servants were surprised! The governor because the bridegroom seemed to have saved the very best for last, and the servants because they knew they just served their boss water - that had changed to wine! **But we should not be surprised!** We know Jesus can do things that seem impossible, and what He does is always best.

### IV. The Ultimate Results

“<sup>11</sup> This beginning of miracles (Gk - signs) did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.” John 2:11

A. A Jewish Signs – The Jews understood God gave signs when He was involved in a situation. Moses, Elijah, and other Old Testament characters proved to the children of Israel their authority by the signs they demonstrated to the people. It was clear in the prophets that their Messiah would come and would bear signs proving it. (Isaiah 35:4-6) The book of John will highlight eight different signs or miracles of Christ showing the spheres of His control – nature, spirit world, disease, death. These signs will authenticate His person and message!

B. First Miracle – This was Jesus’ first miracle. The Greek word translated here “beginning” is half the time translated first in other passages, The Catholics have stories of Jesus as a child healing birds with broken wings and making clay animals come alive, but these are not built on truth. The Scriptures clearly say here the changing of water to wine was His first miracle.

C. “manifested forth his glory;” – There were three results of this miracle. 1) The embarrassment of no wine was resolved 2) Jesus’ glory and power was declared 3) His first disciples believed John 1:14 The reality of Jesus coming from heaven, being the Son of God, and the power He has is His glory!

D. “his disciples believed on him.” – This first miracle was not highly public but marked for a verification for the disciples and aided in the making of a needed separation with Jesus’ earthly family. Notice no one else is mentioned believing on Jesus at this time. Really, no one else did---Mary already knew---she didn’t need verification. This was for the disciples. Pentecost said, “This One to whom they subjected themselves was the Son of God. In the miracle they had seen His glory. He was worthy to be believed.” p. 119

### **Believer’s Application:**

Don’t miss the significance of the details!

1. Cana of Galilee – Jesus’ first miracle was not performed in Jerusalem under the shadow and splendor of the Temple. But rather it was done in Cana, a small, insignificant village of Galilee. If I would have planned the location of Christ’s first miracle, it would have definitely happened in the magnificent city of Jerusalem. Matter of fact, the whole miracle was a quiet, plain event! Realize, only the servants would have initially known the water they dipped out of the stone waterpots had become the best wine their boss had ever tasted!

It is an encouragement to be reminded that God loves to use insignificant, plain, small, everyday places, people, and events to show His glory! God doesn’t need grand places, clever people, and big, spectacular events to show the world His Majesty. He just loves to use those who are willing and available. **I Cor. 1:23-31**

2. Marriage – The fact that Jesus was at a marriage shows His approval, blessing, and celebration of the institution of marriage. He did make it when creating man and woman! Later, Paul will use it as a beautiful picture of Christ and the church. Eph. 5:22-33
3. Obedience to Jesus’ commands preceded the miracle. - Please realize, just as the lepers in Luke 17 obeyed Christ and started on their way to the Temple and were healed, the water was not made wine until it was in the cup on the way to the governor! We are not told all the water was turned to wine – only the water taken and served was transformed! Jesus didn’t create until His word was obeyed! John 8:31-32; 14:23-24
4. Emphasis on the Father’s Will – This is the first time we will see Jesus mention “the hour” of His suffering and death. But this was the ultimate will of the Father for the Son. Doing the Father’s will was the driving force of Jesus throughout His ministry. (John 5:30; Matt. 26:39) As we seek to be

Christlike, this should also be our desire! Our daily prayer should closely follow the pattern Jesus outlined two times while teaching His disciples. “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10) Our desire should be knowing and submitting to God’s will. Hebrews 13:20-21

5. We all must come to Jesus as Savior – Jesus gave the Jews a massive number of signs all pointing to the fact that He was their Messiah. But the Religious Leaders rejected Him. In fact, the more signs Jesus gave and the stronger He verbally confronted their unbelief, the greater their hatred grew for Him. They rejected their Messiah, Lord and Savior.

The problem wasn’t signs, the problem was unbelief! The world has its belief systems but not belief in Jesus as Savior. John 3:1-18 Nicodemus, Mary, Jesus’ brothers and sisters, the Religious Leaders and priests all needed to come to Jesus as Savior. And so do we! “Ye must be born again!”