

# The Gospel of John

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## Chapter Two

### John 2:1-4

*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; (2) and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. (3) When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus \*said to Him, "They have no wine." (4) And Jesus \*said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come."*

This was the third day after the choosing of Nathanael whose home was Cana (21:2). The precise location of Cana is unknown but it seems to be Khirbet Qana that is about nine miles north of Nazareth. This location is supported by Josephus. The mother of Jesus, Jesus, and His disciples were all at the wedding. It seems that Mary had some role in the affairs of the wedding although we do not know the identity of the wedding couple. The mother of Jesus appears twice in this gospel (here and in 19:25) but she is not mentioned by her name. Some interpret the appearance of Jesus at the wedding as in indication of His stamp of approval on the ceremony and, although we don't know if that was the purpose, it certainly is true. This festive occasion could have been planned to last a week and it was poor planning for the wine to run out before the end of the event. This embarrassment would follow the couple all their life.

Mary probably did not know all that had happened in the life of Jesus in the months since He left home. He had been anointed with the Holy Spirit and received power for His ministry (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-13; Luke 3:21-22). Now everything, including family ties, had to take place behind His ministry and may be the reason for His abrupt reply to her. Jesus did not call her mother, which indicates that He was now firmly in His new earthly role. However His reply is not quite as curt as it seems in this translation. It seems that "Woman, dear" would be a better translation. However He did not call her mother for if she has a need from Him now it cannot be because of a mother/son relationship. Jesus did make that clear. Her request did not have any apparent relationship to His messianic mission so He asked what such an action had to do with either Him or her at this point. He further stated that His hour had not yet come. His "hour" probably refers to the first hour when He manifested the reason He was sent by the Father; "Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You" (John 17:1).

### John 2:5-10

*His mother \*said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." (6) Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. (7) Jesus \*said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim. (8) And He \*said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it to him. (9) When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter \*called the bridegroom, (10) and \*said to him, "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."*

Mary's statement demonstrates that she had some authority at the event and that she had full confidence that Jesus would do the right thing and help in this situation. However she could not have known the full implications of what He was about to do. The waterpots were quite large because each guest would have been required by Jewish tradition to wash their hands before eating, which would require a lot of water. The picture below is an example of such a container used for ceremonial washings:



The conversion of this water to wine would have filled about 2000 four-ounce glasses. The custom was to dilute the wine by three parts of water to one of wine so there would have been enough wine to last several days if their content was used for the wine. This washing was part of the Jewish ceremonial events that Jesus would replace with something better and changing the water to wine may be what John meant by including this event in his gospel. It is commonly thought that the water in the waterpots was changed to wine. Many diagrams related to this occurrence show the water pots as small containers such as:



However such containers would not be used for ceremonial washings. The context and sentence structure make it clear that Jesus told them to **draw** more water from the well and it was this

water that became the wine. The water changed into wine was drawn from the well directly indicating a new source for this new wine:



The Greek word translated “draw” (*helko*) is the same as used in: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me **draws** him; and I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:44) and means to use force to bring the item forward. It is also used in secular Greek writings when discussing drawing water from a well. Filling the waterpots to the rim with water indicated the complete fulfillment of the Jewish ceremony and the wine drawn from the well is representative of the new order introduced by Jesus. The filled jars were limited but water from the well was not so limited. The custom was to serve the best wine at first and after people had been drinking for a time the host would substitute an inferior wine and nobody would know the difference. However the chief steward recognized the new wine as greatly superior to the wine first served. Similarly the new wine represents the superior procedure introduced by Jesus. This occasion also foreshadows the discussion Jesus had with the woman at the well regarding living water (John 4:11-15).

This understanding of this first miracle of Jesus has removed my puzzlement over this event that lasted for over 40 years. I never heard or read a sermon explaining this event reasonably and I always wondered why Jesus did it and why John included it in his gospel. Some preachers even relate it to the love Jesus had for His mother but it has no such relationship. It had to have some great significance to be included but nobody ever explained it satisfactorily to me. This was a great “aha” moment for me as I understood that this first miracle of Jesus initiated His ministry as a replacement for the Jewish religion of works. Such an interpretation is strengthened by the next verse.

### **John 2:11**

*This beginning of His **signs** Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.*

The miracles of Jesus are not simply miracles but **signs of a reality underneath them**. John states that this is the beginning of the signs of Jesus. This first miracle then is actually representative of His total mission in that He replaces the old Jewish order with the new order. The Greek word for miracles is *terata* and it is never used in the NT unless it is accompanied by *semeia* (signs). The word *terata* is only used once in the gospel of John and there it is also used with *semeia*: “So Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs (*semeia*) and wonders (*terata*), you simply will not believe." (John 4:48) The word “signs” above is bolded to emphasize that

John wisely decided to describe the miracles of Jesus as “signs” and such a presentation helps us to better understand them. John writes that this sign made known the glory of Jesus to His disciples and they believed in Him. The disciples would have clearly understood this event as not something to please His mother but the first sign of the new ministry of salvation.

### **John 2:12**

*After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.*

Capernaum is translated “the village of Nahum” and is on the north-west shore of the lake of Galilee so from Cana one would travel down to it. It is about 16 miles ENE of Cana. John tells us that the entire family of Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum and it is here that Jesus had His headquarters for the most of His Galilean ministry. The natural interpretation is that the brothers of Jesus are the natural children of Joseph and Mary with Jesus as the firstborn of Mary. Jesus had four brothers and some sisters (Matt 13:55-56). John writes later that His brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5). When John writes that they stayed there “a few days” he means that they stayed there for a few days before traveling to Jerusalem for the first Passover of His ministry.

### **John 2:13-14**

*The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.*

Many of the readers of this book would be Gentiles so John repeatedly refers to all festivals as “of the Jews” so that the readers would understand. Since these are superseded ceremonies, some interpreters think John is demeaning their festivals but that is probably not true. This Passover celebrated the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian captivity and this particular one was probably the one of AD 28. John mentions two other Passovers in John 6:4 and John 11:55 and only the last one is mentioned in the Synoptic record. There have been many discussions about the apparent discrepancy between the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 21:10-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-46) and the Gospel of John concerning the events of this Passover. The Synoptic Gospels all record this event at the end of the ministry of Jesus and John records it at the beginning. The best explanation seems to be that there were two such occurrences of Jesus exercising His anger at the sellers in the Temple and John only recorded one at the beginning of His ministry. There are differences between the descriptions such as sheep and oxen are not mentioned in the Synoptics. It is certainly not impossible that Jesus cleansed the Temple on two occasions and if the one reported by the Synoptics at the end of His ministry were the second time this happened the rulers would have been doubly incensed by His actions.

The selling of animals for sacrifice was initiated as an assist for the worshipers many of whom had traveled long distances so that bringing the animals would have been difficult. Also people from different regions would have brought different currencies so the money changing would have been very helpful. This was also the occasion when people could pay the annual half-shekel for the maintenance of the temple. The only change allowed for this purpose was Tyrian because of its better silver content. Two people would often pay this tithe together such as for Peter and Jesus (Matt 17:27). The commission charged for money changing would have

probably been 12.5%. This area of the temple was to be used for worship by the Gentiles so all of this activity would have interfered with their worship and some interpreters think that the concessions had become an activity where the chief priests were making money and thus debasing the temple.

### **John 2:15-16**

*And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; (16) and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."*

This act of Jesus would have created considerable chaos with animals being driven around and the money changers trying to retrieve their money. Some interpreters think the actions of Jesus are fulfillments of the following (Canaanite meaning a trader):

- Mal 3:1 "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.
- Zech 14:21 Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day.

The preceding verses of Zech 14 tell of all nations coming to worship and restricting the Gentile area to commerce activity would have taken away that place of worship and Jesus could have been reacting against that restriction. John reports that Jesus only addressed the sellers of the doves in verse 16 and these birds were primarily available for the poor who could not afford the bigger animal sacrifices. Thus Jesus may have been specifically angered about the people taking advantage of the poorer people that would be consistent with His ministry thrust. He was certainly opposed to people making His Father's house a place of business and we should always remember this admonition.

### **John 2:17**

*His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME."*

This action by Jesus made a tremendous impression upon the disciples and, perhaps later, they considered His actions a fulfillment of: "For zeal for Your house has consumed me, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me." (Psalm 69:9). Other passages from this psalm have been applied to Jesus such as dealing with His anguish of soul (vv1-4), the gall and vinegar of the Cross (v 21), and His separation from His people (v 8).

### **John 2:18-22**

*The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" (19) Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (20) The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You*

*raise it up in three days?" (21) But He was speaking of the temple of His body. (22) So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.*

The Jews now demanded a sign from Jesus to justify His actions. Matthew also records a time when the Pharisees wanted to see a sign from Him and He is recorded as replying:

Matt 12:39-40 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Now however Jesus replied to them in a similar manner but rather like a parable that they could not understand. They thought that He told them He could rebuild the temple of Herod in three days. The renewal had taken 46 years and it was still not finished so they perhaps thought He was insane. The temple was not completed until AD 63 only seven years prior to its total destruction. John explains that Jesus was referring to the temple of His body. When He was later resurrected the disciples remembered this statement of Jesus and they believed the Scripture and the spoken word of Jesus. John is also stating that Jesus had in mind the end of His ministry even at its beginning. Thus it is clear that Jesus knew the end from the beginning even though His disciples did not understand this fact until after His resurrection. The Gospel presents the life of Jesus from the perspective of the resurrection proving that Jesus was the Son of God and His life was offered for forgiveness of sins of His people.

The word for temple in John 2:1-15 is *hieron* that means the entire complex of the temple but the word for temple in John 2:19-21 is *naos* meaning the sanctuary or holy house proper. It was only the naos that was thought of as the dwelling place of God. So when Jesus referred to the temple of His body He is properly referring to the dwelling place of God since He was God and indwelt by the Holy Spirit for His ministry. The church took up this meaning as they spoke of a new temple being the body of the believer (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21; 1 Peter 2:4).

### **John 2:23-25**

*Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. (24) But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, (25) and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.*

There is a huge difference between seeing the signs of the work of Jesus and knowing Him. Many of those in Jerusalem at this time believed from observing the signs but Jesus knew their hearts and did not give Himself to them. The demons also believe but they are not in favor with Jesus (James 2:19). We will see that Nicodemus is a good example of how a simple belief in Jesus based upon His actions or words is not sufficient to be a child of God (John 1:12). Not everyone who calls Jesus Lord is known by Him:

Mat 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. (22) "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (23) "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

He certainly has no need for anyone else to tell Him what is within man for Jesus knows what is in the heart of man: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. (20) "These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man." (Matt 15:19-20).

Everyone who says that He believes in Jesus or even calls Him Lord and does extraordinary things in His name should carefully examine their heart to make certain that they really do entrust themselves totally to Jesus as Lord.