

Commentary on John 2:1-12

International Bible Lessons

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L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, March 18, 2012**, is from **John 2:1-12**. Five **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse by verse **[International Bible Lessons Commentary](#)** below. The **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, which are also available on the **[Bible Lesson Forum](#)**, will aid teachers in class preparation and in conducting class discussion. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **[International Bible Lessons Commentary Index](#)**. The weekly **[International Bible Lesson](#)** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in **[The Oklahoman](#)** newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

John 2:1-12

(John 2:1) On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

After John the Baptist announced that Jesus was “the Lamb of God,” Jesus called some of His disciples from near the Jordan River to follow Him (John 1:36). Nathanael of Cana was among those called. Christian tradition (not the Bible) taught that Nathanael might have been the bridegroom in Cana.

(John 2:2) Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

Nazareth and Cana were near enough to each other in Galilee that there may have been some rivalry between the two towns (John 1:46), but friendships existed among nearby families as well, since Jesus’ mother, Jesus, and His disciples attended the wedding. If Nathanael was the bridegroom, he would have invited them in spite of his feelings about Nazareth as a hometown rival.

(John 2:3) When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”

In addition to being a guest, Mary may also have served as a special hostess, for when she learned about the wine giving out, she took action. Knowing her oldest Son, she knew He was capable of solving the problem. Perhaps she only expected Him to give money to the stewards to buy wine. If Nathanael was the groom, she would naturally go to Jesus, because Nathanael was one of His disciples. She may not have expected a miracle, but she knew Jesus was special (Luke 2:19).

(John 2:4) And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.”

To readers today, Jesus’ reply may seem disrespectful, but He respectfully did not address her as “mother.” By addressing her as “woman,” He needed to make clear to her (and to those who would learn about this first sign of His) that He would not do what He intended to do just because she was His mother. In addition, He told her that neither she nor He had any (moral or legal) obligation to solve the problem. He wanted to make clear that He would solve the problem because of His compassionate love and grace toward others, and not because His mother asked Him to do something or because He was obligated to do something in this situation. Jesus also wanted to make clear to her (and to us) that a wedding feast of some friends was not the place for Him to take front and center stage by working a miracle in their midst. He was not going to do anything that would take proper attention away from the bride and groom. So, He chose to work His miracle as a “sign” in a private and quiet way at this wedding.

(John 2:5) His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Perhaps because of her official position, Mary commanded the servants to do whatever Jesus told them. Jesus did not take the authority to take action unto himself. Mary gave the authority to Jesus with complete trust. She knew His heart, His capabilities, and His willingness to help those in need. She expected the servants to obey Him.

(John 2:6) Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

The Jewish people washed their hands ceremonially when they entered a house. These water jars were for cleansing the *outside* of the person, and they probably did prevent the spread of some diseases. They would have been kept clean and pure. The six jars would have provided between 120 and 180 gallons of wine. After Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection, through the new covenant in His blood, He would cleanse those who believed in Him from their sins (*inside*).



According to Jewish law, stone vessels, unlike pottery, are not susceptible to becoming ritually impure. The largest vessels shown above, measuring 2 to 3 feet tall, may be of a ritual type described in the gospel account of the marriage at Cana. Information and graphic from mystudybible.us/ref/purty.html.

(John 2:7) Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim.

The servants refilled these stone water jars, probably from the town well or cistern. They obeyed Jesus completely, exactly, and immediately. When Jesus said “Fill,” they filled them “to the brim.” They serve as an example for all who say they believe in and follow Jesus.

(John 2:8) He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it.

Jesus did not make His miracle, His first “sign,” into a dramatic scene that would draw attention away from the bride and groom and to himself. His heavenly Father works quietly and often unseen too. Jesus enhanced the special occasion by providing the best wine. When the servants obeyed Him, He worked a miracle.

(John 2:9) When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom

As Jesus intended, the chief steward gave the bridegroom the credit for the best wine. The bridegroom received the honor as was the custom, though the servants knew that Jesus had provided the wine through a miracle. According to Jewish law (requiring two or more witnesses to a event), enough witnesses saw that Jesus was responsible for this miracle—that He worked through willing servants—to substantiate the fact that He did so. After the wedding, there would be plenty of time for people to talk about this first sign that Jesus gave and what it might mean to them.

(John 2:10) and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

In the Old Testament, God sent prophets and other leaders to teach and guide His people in His ways. But when God sent Jesus, His only Son, into the world, He kept the best for last. The prophets were not bad; they were inferior to Jesus. Those who follow Jesus immediately recognize that He is the best, for He is the promised Messiah and the fulfillment of God’s promises through His prophets.

(John 2:11) Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Jesus' miracles were signs that pointed to Who He was as Messiah and Son of God. During His teaching, Jesus called himself the bridegroom (Luke 5:34-35). He worked His first miracle for a bridegroom at a wedding. With His miracle, Jesus showed His glory to His disciples and to the servants who obeyed Him. His disciples believed in Him (these were the first to believe in Him) based upon the evidence He provided through His miracles and His teaching. He did not provide this evidence to all the guests at the wedding feast, but they would learn about it at the appropriate time and have the opportunity to believe in Him too.

(John 2:12) After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days.

After He began His ministry, Jesus did not make His home in Nazareth, but in Capernaum. He had brothers. His brothers, mother, and disciples followed Him to Capernaum immediately after He worked this miracle. Perhaps because He had worked the miracle His brothers and mother went too. Though they followed Him there, His brothers did not believe in Him then (see John 7:1-10 and Matthew 12:46-50). We do not know if all of His brothers came to believe in Him or not, but His brother James did come to believe in Him (see Galatians 1:19). Obviously, His miracles did not convince everyone who witnessed them.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think Jesus performed His first miracle or “sign” at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee?
2. Why do you think Jesus used the purification jars to change water to wine?
3. In what ways did Jesus avoid showing favoritism when He worked His miracle?
4. What lessons can we learn from the servants who put water in the jars?
5. Why do you think John emphasized that the disciples believed in Him after He performed the sign?

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