



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 2:1-12 Commentary **New Revised Standard Version**

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

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

On the first day, Jesus called Andrew, Simon Peter, and John (the writer of the Gospel of John) to be His disciples. On the second day, Jesus called Philip and Nathanael to be His disciples. Nathanael was from Cana (John 21:2). John the Baptist introduced Jesus as "the Lamb of God." In addition, the five disciples called Jesus, "Rabbi" (or Teacher), "Messiah" (or Christ), "Son of God," and "King of Israel" (John 1:35-52). On the third day, Jesus went to a wedding with His five new disciples. Mary, His mother, was also there. Mary must have known the groom and bride more closely than others because when she learned that they had run out of wine at the wedding feast she showed concern and went to Jesus for help.

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

Jesus, too, must have known the couple by previous experiences because they invited Him and His disciples to the wedding. Jesus had worked as a

carpenter in Nazareth until He was thirty years old and had probably also worked in nearby Cana where He could have met and become friends with many people. By attending this wedding, Jesus showed His disciples how important marriage and the family is, even though Jesus never married. Jesus wants His followers to participate in activities pleasing to God, including marriage if that is God's will for them personally. Marriage is a God-ordained and good institution that Jesus upheld so some later would not despise marriage or think or teach that it is improper for followers of Jesus to marry.

In the Bible, the relationship between Jesus and the Church is sometimes described as or compared to a marriage relationship. John the Apostle described his vision in heaven: "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.' (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.) Then the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' And he added, 'These are the true words of God'" (Revelation 19:6-9). (See also: John 3:29, Revelation 18:23; 21:2; 21:9; 22:17).

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

By His presence at the wedding, just as His important ministry and the calling of His disciples had begun, Jesus affirmed the importance and value of marriage and attending celebrations. Jesus' mother came to Jesus and stated a fact that revealed a need. She knew that He was concerned for the needs of others, even as she was. The availability of wine at a wedding feast was considered a social necessity, and to run out of wine would have been a huge social embarrassment, if not worse. Just as wine at this wedding was a necessity, so Jesus' teaching is a spiritual necessity for everyone.

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

Calling His mother “Woman” was not unkind or unloving no matter how it might sound to our sensitive ears. Written words do not always convey the love or the tone of the person speaking. By addressing His mother as “Woman,” Jesus showed that He was not going to meet the need at the wedding party simply because His “mother” asked Him to do so. Later, some would teach the false doctrine that Mary is “the Queen of Heaven,” and teach their followers to pray to her to intercede with Jesus for them, thinking Jesus would never refuse His mother’s request. Perhaps to show that this future false teaching is untrue, Jesus called His mother “Woman.” Jesus’ use of “Woman” when addressing His mother should have prevented the worship of Mary in later centuries. Furthermore, Jesus said His true mother and brothers (the true members of God’s family) were those who did the will of God: “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:50). His mother, Mary, would demonstrate her true faith in Jesus at this wedding feast. Though Jesus’ hour had not yet come to manifest or reveal himself to the world, Jesus would do His first sign quietly and unnoticed except by a few disciples and servants which would keep the attention where it belonged at that time — on the bridegroom and the bride at their wedding.

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

Jesus’ mother totally trusted in her Son. He had never failed to honor His father and His mother on earth. All His life, she had found Him dependable, concerned about others, and willing to meet their real needs. She knew He would do the right thing, and she trusted in His wisdom whatever the situation, because she knew Him. Therefore, she told the servers at the wedding feast: “Do whatever He tells you.” At that moment, they did not know that in obeying Jesus they would be doing the will of God. Mary’s command to the servants also expressed a way of life for all who claim to be students and followers of Jesus—we should do whatever He tells us as His Spirit leads us according to the Bible.

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

The six stone water jars were for ritual washings. Though they might externally clean a person's feet before entering a house and clean hands before eating, the focus of attention was on ceremonial laws to be kept and not on personal hygiene. The six stone jars represent a ceremonial law of God. Jesus came to fulfill the law of God as completely as He changed water into wine at the wedding feast. John began to prepare his readers for Jesus' fulfillment of the law in John 1:17, "The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." By grace, by His unmerited favor, Jesus used His divine power to change water into wine.

During His ministry, some criticized Jesus for His teachings on the traditions of the Jews: "The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles. So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, 'Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?'" (Mark 7:3-5). Jesus came teaching; and just as new wine will burst old wineskins, Jesus' teaching, sacrificial death, and sending of the Holy Spirit to fill believers will cleanse morally and spiritually those who believe in and follow Him. In Matthew 9:17, Jesus taught, "Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved." Jesus made ceremonial washing obsolete, but not washing for physical cleanliness and good health.

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

The servants went to Jesus immediately at the instruction of Mary. Jesus simply said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." As far as we know, the servants did not ask, "Why?" As far as we know, He did not give them an explanation for what He was going to do through them. These servants simply obeyed Jesus completely and waited for further instructions. When Jesus said, "Fill," they obeyed completely by filling these jars "to the brim." Perhaps the symbolism here includes the truth that there is no longer any

room in the teaching of Jesus for obeying the ceremonial laws of Moses as a means to having your sins forgiven and inheriting eternal life. Furthermore, after Jesus' death and resurrection, He cleansed His followers from all sin and began filling His followers to the brim with the Holy Spirit, which Jesus still does today. Then, the Holy Spirit empowers and guides Jesus' followers to fulfill the moral law of God, the law of love for God and others.

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

Again, the servants obeyed Jesus explicitly. We do not know the exact time the water changed to wine. If it did not change until the moment it touched the lips of the master of the banquet, then no telling what the servants might have been thinking as they took water (soon to become wine) to the master. If the water turned into wine the moment they drew some out, they could give it to the master with true joy in their hearts and on their faces. They certainly found true joy after they obeyed Jesus and saw the results.

(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

No doubt God and Jesus perform countless miracles. Our moment-by-moment existence and the life of each person in the world are divine miracles-after-miracles. The master of the banquet did not know that a miracle had changed the water into wine. Most of the miracles God and Jesus do are never seen or recognized by us and others. The servants who obeyed and trusted in Jesus when they did what Jesus told them knew that a miracle had been performed by Jesus through them. The obedient servants of Jesus Christ give thanks and see far more miracles than unbelievers. Jesus honored the bridegroom (just as Jesus will be honored at the marriage supper of the Lamb) rather than draw attention to himself as the One who saved the bridegroom and bride from disgrace at their wedding. Just as Jesus transformed the water into wine without our understanding “how” He did so, He completely transforms all who receive Him and believe in His Name though we do not know “how” He does so. In

John 1:12, we read, “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.”

(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.”

Spiritually, the “inferior wine” was the ceremonial law of Moses so the Israelites could be a distinctive and separate people, a kingdom of priests for God to all the nations. When Jesus came as the promised Messiah, the Person that the Law of God and the prophets pointed to, God saved the “good wine” or the “best wine,” which was Jesus, for the last. The effect of Jesus’ coming was for the benefit of all who would follow Him throughout subsequent human history. Transformed into children of God, into a new creation filled with the Holy Spirit, the followers of Jesus are filled with “the best,” with Jesus, who gives them true and lasting joy, peace, guidance and power for serving God and others. When believers see Jesus face-to-face someday at the marriage supper of the Lamb, they will enjoy the best of God and all God gives for eternity.

(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.

In Jesus’ first sign, Jesus revealed His glory to His mother, who trusted in Him when she brought a real need to Jesus. In Jesus’ first sign, Jesus revealed His glory to the servants who obeyed Him completely and trusted He knew what He was doing when they obeyed Him. In Jesus’ first sign, He revealed His glory to His disciples as they observed the entire event and believed in Him. Jesus confirmed in His first sign what they had said about Him after they first met Him. And they would see many more signs, because Jesus said to these disciples: “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man’” (John 1:51).

(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.

Perhaps to give His family and disciples time to rest after the wedding or to explain more about the meaning of His first sign to His followers, as well as give himself more time to spend in prayer to His Heavenly Father as was His custom, they all went to Capernaum where Jesus made His home. Later, in John 7:5, we learn that Jesus' brothers did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. However, we learn in Galatians 1:19, that James, at least, became an apostle. After a few days, Jesus went to Jerusalem with His disciples to celebrate the Passover, where He cleansed the temple and began to manifest His glory by working many signs publicly.

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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