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## John 2:1-12 *The Cana Wedding!*

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Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study [www.intothyword.org](http://www.intothyword.org)

**General Idea:** Jesus and His family were invited to a wedding at Cana in Galilee where His mother was to be a participant, perhaps similar to being a bridesmaid. Jesus' disciples also went with him. This was a prominent and important cultural celebration that lasted for many days. Wine was an important part of the marriage feast, so when it ran out, the newly married couple and their parents would have been dishonored. So, Jesus' mother asked Jesus to do something to fix the problem. Jesus did not want to make Himself known yet, but respected His mom and performed His first public and recorded miracle. Jesus took the six, large, stone water jars holding perhaps thirty gallons each, and had the servants fill them with water. Then, He told them to take it to the host to taste; thinking it was still just water, the servants were shocked to find it was wine! When the host of the feast tasted it, he was in awe, and, not knowing where it came from, he proclaimed that it was the best wine he had ever had. He further stated that everyone else always serves the best wine first and saves the poor stuff for last. This minor miracle, seemingly insignificant, saved a group of people from embarrassment that would have lasted for most of their lives and showed the care that our Lord has for us—even in our daily lives. This also allowed His disciples to get a glimpse of His power and magnitude.

### **Contexts and Background:**

Over the centuries, this passage has been seen as another transformational sign from the covenant of law to grace. The old order is seen as old wine that is gone; jars of clay symbolize ceremonial proceedings and cleansing, and a new order is symbolized by the new wine, which is far better than the old. Also, salvation is seen as a banquet and a celebration of joy like a wedding feast (Isa. 25:6-9; 2 Cor. 5:17-20).

### **Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:**

- *Third day.* This was perhaps in reference to the wedding ceremony, feast, and celebration that would last seven days, or it may have meant it had been three days since Jesus called His first disciples. This may also allude to the third day on which Christ rose from the dead.
- *Wedding.* The wedding ceremony was traditionally seven days long as the groom took his new bride from her mother's home to his. The local leaders, as well as Rabbis, which Jesus was considered to be then, were distinguished guests.
- *Cana in Galilee...Capernaum.* A fishing village with several small townships between three and nine miles from Nazareth, depending on locations. Surrounded by mountains and a plain in northern Palestine, it was the home of Mary and Joseph. Jesus was born in Bethlehem because they were traveling then; his home was in Nazareth (Isa 9:1). Nazareth and Galilee were small villages that the Romans built and filled with Gentiles. The more "religious" Jews shunned them and any Jew that came from there. It was made up of the working class, fishing and trade centers where the people were ethnically mixed, and who were tough and rough; it was not the spiritual haven one thought a Messiah would come from. Many Bible commentaries assumed that this was a small agricultural village. However, recent archeology finds show us that it actually was a large city 20 miles from Capernaum, which also has been found to be much larger than previously thought. The Herods had built a very large city hub at both places for the Romans, which also contained "motels" and trading centers for the Roman soldiers and travelers. It was in this area that Jesus spent 30 years of His earthly life experiencing humanity, all that man is, does, goes through, and can become. Most Prophets were rejected in their home town. In Acts, the early Christians were called the "sect of the Nazarenes" (Jer. 1:1; 11:21-23; Matt. 4:12-17; 26:71; Mark 1:21; 2:1; 6:1-6; Luke 4:14-30; John 7:52; Acts 24:5).
- *Wine.* Meaning fermented drink made from crushed grapes. In Bible times, wine had an alcohol content of 5% to 12%+, just as wine today has. That is basic fermentation science that has not

changed (Eph. 5:18). To say biblical wine had no alcohol is being very unknowledgeable about how fermentation takes place. As soon as a grape is crushed either in a winepress or in your mouth, the yeast on its skin comes in contact with the sugars in the grape producing a chemical reaction that creates ethanol alcohol. The longer it sits, the stronger the alcohol content will be—up to a point. By the way, the orange juice in your refrigerator has up to 5%+ alcohol in it! For the most part wine was an everyday beverage as it purified the drinking water and most people diluted the wine two, three, or four parts water to one part wine. Here Jesus provides full fledge vintage wine. However, being drunk at a wedding was a huge insult. Is drinking wine wrong? The Bible is against the misuse of wine and drunkenness (Gen. 9; 19:32; 1 Sam. 1:24; 2 Sam 16:1; 2 Kings 18:32; Prov. 4:17; 20:1; 23:20; 1 Tim. 3:8). I am not condoning the consumption of alcohol, but remember both Calvin and Luther were heavy drinkers. Moreover, the Bible does not condemn its use. In fact, it promotes it because back then, it was needed to sterilize the water they drank so people would not get sick (Gen. 14:18; Ex. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Ruth 2:14; Psalm 104:15; Prov. 3:10; Luke 10:34; John 2:3; 1 Tim 5:23).

- *Wine was gone.* This was a big social embarrassment that would have seriously damaged the new couple's reputation and shamed their families and host. It was a responsibility and duty to provide the food, wine, and provision for stay-over. Families would save for years to make this happen and be a blessed event; some or most of the cost was offset by the gifts of the guests. The women took charge of the food and would realize something was amiss before the bride, groom, or guests would. Mary stepped in to save the day. She knew Jesus could do something.
- *Woman.* A means of addressing an older women with respect, like saying Ma'am today, but not usually what was said to a mom. In the Gospels, Jesus is always gentle and respectful towards women. Today, this phrase seems condescending, but the word is very respectful and honoring. Jesus did not rebuke His mother because she tipped His hand and overstepped His timing; Jesus gave her His love and respect. We do not have the right to dictate to other adults what they should do; however, we can be good examples and offer our insights and help when called upon. For example: a husband must never dictate or condescend to His wife thinking this passage is an example for it; it is not. Jesus' Mom, Mary, would eventually live with John the disciple; this was their first meeting (John 4:21; 6:42; 8:10; 19:25-27)!
- *Why do you involve me/what does this have to do with me?* Jesus addressed His mother in His role as Messiah and honored her by His role as her son. Jesus' mother had no cultural or spiritual role, or right or authority over Jesus. Mary had no reason or role to interfere in Christ's work. This contradicts some denominational teachings that one can pray to Mary to get Jesus to do as they want, pointing to this passage for support. That theme nullifies and misses the point of prayer and Jesus' role as sole Savior; this is also refuted by proper understanding of this passage (Mark 1:24; 5:7; Luke 2:35).
- *My time/hour has not yet come.* This refers to Jesus' timing of His suffering and sacrifice for our redemption, teaching that mere persons cannot dictate to God their will or expect Him to do as they wish. Jesus was very careful about what He did publicly—especially in His hometown—because people would have either sought to kill Him prematurely or raised an insurrection to make Him King. That is why He often says, "tell no one." Thus, when Jesus started doing His miracles, the time for the Cross was near (John 2:4; 7:6-8, 30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).
- *Do whatever he tells you.* Mary had confidence, submission, and faith in God, and a deep love for Him. This is why she was chosen to be the mother of the Incarnate God! Even though she may not have understood, she trusted in Jesus. Allow Jesus to turn your water into wine and do not whine (Gen. 32:26-30; Ex. 33:12)!
- *Stone water jars... ceremonial washing.* This type of jar was not for drinks or wine; rather it was sacred and used to fill immersion pools for ritual cleansing and baptismal ceremonies. It is interesting to point out that Jesus using these jars in this way defiled them so they could not be used again for ritual, thus indicating that the direct care for a friend is more important than a ritual to show that one cares. This

may also signify the transition from the Law to the superiority of Grace (Matt. 15:1-2; John 4:13; 7:38-39)!

- *Master/governor of the banquet/feast.* This is a person picked by the father of the bride or elected to serve as the host for the festivities. It was an honor and a responsibility. His reputation was also at stake.
- *Water that had been turned into wine.* This was miraculous because the very molecular structure was changed; even today's advanced scientific thinking cannot explain how that could have happened. But this miracle was also subtle; it seems only Jesus' mother, the first disciples, and the servants knew.
- *The choice wine first.* Even mild drinking will affect one's taste and thus hosts would serve their very best wine first, just as wine stewards do today. Jesus is the best gift that comes last as the last covenant God makes with humanity.
- *Miraculous signs.* Meaning an extraordinary event that cannot be done by human will or means. God uses these to point to and prove His Glory and Power. The significance is never the marvel of the event; rather, it is what the event showcases—and that is Christ (Isa. 35:1-2; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13; John 4:54; 6:14; 9:16; 11:47).
- *Revealed/manifested his glory.* God reveals Himself in the Old Testament mostly through signs and wonders, as well as miraculous events as Moses exemplified. Moses' first miracle was turning water into blood; Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine. Blood is the symbol of sacrifice and atonement to please God; wine is the celebration that God is pleased, and Jesus makes that so (Ex. 7:14-24; 16:7).
- *Put their faith in him.* Jesus is the source of life! He used this situation to show His new disciples that He was not only the Messiah, but the very Deity, God. The call for us is not only to recognize His deity, but to also live, trust, and obey Him as the wine servants did two thousand years ago. Being a Christian must also elevate our temperament and Fruit of the Spirit so we are joyful and productive (John 1:14; 20:8-9; Rev. 8:8).
- *There they stayed for a few days.* Jesus exemplifies the duty to participate in life's celebrations and cultural events. Christians are never to be separatists or baulkers of social duty, as long as it is moral. Our religion needs to be lived out in our lives, and our righteousness (because of Christ) is to be brought with us everywhere we go. In other words, *be of good character.*

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

This passage is about the care that God has for us in our daily life struggles and needs. We have a God who cares and comes to serve us. Jesus went to a most important and joyful event to show His support and care. This was also at Jesus' hometown; everyone there knew Him as He grew up and now, He displays His first miracle before them. The image in this passage is Jesus in everyday life and at a great celebration. The questions are, *is Jesus invited to your events and life? Is He the Great Miracle Worker in you? Are you celebrating life because Who and What He has done for you? Is your life joyful because of Christ? Does your faith allow for joy and obedience to His Lordship?*

Jesus is calling us to Him. He calls His followers from the darkness and despair of their lives to a new life filled with wonder and hope. Jesus came to overcome and trounce hopelessness and bring hope to us for a triumphant life. Jesus comes fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, the promise from Eden foretold throughout the Scriptures, now fulfilled. Christ is the incarnation, God coming into humanity, a radical transformation that gives us our radical transformation and abundance. We are new, beyond measure and thought; we have reason and hope beyond what the world or any religious or philosophical system can bring us. We have Jesus the Christ in us when we accept and receive His gift into our lives. We have Him; the question is, *what are we doing with Jesus in our day-to-day lives?*

The joys of the world will fall and fail, and before they fail they will be fleeting. The Joy Christ brings is eternal. Allow Christ to also be your source of life and joy!

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

**Additional Questions:**

1. Have you ever experienced being dishonored or very embarrassed so people bring it up for years? How did you feel? Why would Jesus want to solve this problem?
2. Have you ever thought that your salvation is seen as a banquet and a celebration of joy? How can you show more joy to God and others?
3. Did Mary expect Jesus to do a miracle or find some other solution? How does Jesus respond to Mary? How and why is He gentle and respectful towards women (considering the culture)?
4. How do you or have you shown your love and respect to your Mom? Why do you suppose some believe that you can pray to Mary to get Jesus to do as you need?
5. Why did Mary have confidence, submission, faith in God, and a deep love for Him? How would you rate your confidence level with God on a scale of 1 to 10? What would Mary's level have been?
6. What does it mean to you to put your faith in Jesus? How have you exercised this? What more can you do?
7. Why is this story about wine important? Is drinking wine wrong? What did this show us about Jesus?
8. Jesus shows us that the direct care for a friend is more important than a ritual to show that one cares. So, how does this affect how we "do church"?
9. How does this passage show the care that our Lord has for us even for our daily lives? How is Jesus invited to the events in your life?
10. What did this event mean to His disciples? If you had been there, what would you have done to get a glimpse of His power and magnitude?
11. If you do not understand Jesus, how can you trust in Him? How can you do so more? What do you need Jesus to do to turn your water into wine and not whine?
12. What are you doing with Jesus in your day-to-day life? What do you need to do more of?