

A Wedding in Cana

John 2:1-12

SS Lesson for 01/24/2016

Devotional Scripture: John 10:24-38

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reviews how God is at work in the earthly life of the Lord Jesus as He attended **A Wedding in Cana**. The **study's aim** is to understand that God is at work in our lives in every detail and circumstance. The **study's application** is to so order our lives in obedience to God that we will be "in on" whatever He is doing.
(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: John 2:1-2

1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Jesus' first miracle in the Gospel of John was a private one, known only to His disciples, some servants, and probably Jesus' mother. If Matthew had not yet been called to be one of the Twelve, this may explain why the miracle is not recorded in the Synoptics. Of the four Gospel writers only John was there. John used the word "signs" (*sēmeiōn*, v. 11) because he was seeking to draw attention away from the miracles as such and to point up their significance. A miracle is also a "wonder" (*teras*), a "power" (*dynamis*), and a "strange event" (*paradoxos*). This turning water into wine was the first of 35 recorded miracles Jesus performed.

On the third day probably means three days after the calling of Philip and Nathanael. (Cf. the sequence of days suggested by "the next day" in 1:29, 35, 43.) It would take a couple of days to reach **Cana in Galilee** from Bethany near Jericho of Judea (1:28). Cana was near Nazareth, though its exact location is unknown. **Jesus' mother was there**, but John did not give her name (cf. 2:12; 6:42; 19:25-27). In his Gospel, John never named himself or the mother of Jesus. (Jesus' mother went to the home of the beloved disciple John [19:27].) Oriental wedding feasts often lasted seven days. The feast followed the groom's taking of his bride to his home or his father's house, before the consummation of the marriage. When the supply of **wine** was used up, Mary turned to Jesus in hope that He could solve the problem. Did Mary expect a miracle? In the light of verse 11 this is not likely. Mary had not yet seen any miracles done by her Son. The word **woman** applied to His mother may seem strange to a modern reader, but it was a polite, kind expression (cf. 19:26). However, the clause, **Why do you involve Me?** was a common expression in Greek that referred to a difference in realms or relations. Demons spoke these words when they were confronted by Christ ("What do You want with us?" [Mark 1:24]; "What do You want with me?" [Mark 5:7]). Mary had to learn a painful lesson (cf. Luke 2:35), namely, that Jesus was committed to God the Father's will and the time for His manifestation was in the Father's hand. **My time has not yet come** or similar words occur five times in John (2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20). Later the fact that His time had come is mentioned three times (12:23; 13:1; 17:1). Mary's response **to the servants (Do whatever He tells you)** revealed her submission to her Son. Even though she did not fully understand, she trusted Him. The water in the **six... water jars** (of **20 to 30 gallons** each) was **used** for Jewish purification rites before and after meals (cf. Matt. 15:1-2). The contrast between the old order and the new way is evident (cf. John 4:13; 7:38-39). Probably the water jars were outside. **The master of the banquet**, in charge of the festivities, would not know he was drinking from the purification jars. For a Jew this would be unthinkable. The servants dipped out the water, which had become wine. As **the master of the banquet tasted the... wine**, he found it to be superior to what they had been drinking. In contrast with a common custom in which the best **wine** was served **first** and the lesser quality later, he affirmed that this wine, served last, was the **best**. The significance of this miracle is that Christianity is an advance over Judaism. God has kept the best gift—His Son—until **now**. The significance of the miracle was explained by John as a manifestation of Christ's **glory**. In contrast with the ministry of Moses who turned water into blood as a sign of God's judgment (Ex. 7:14-24), Jesus brings joy. His first miracle was a gracious indication of the joy which He

provides by the Spirit. The sign points to Jesus as the Word in the flesh, who is the mighty Creator. Each year He turns water to wine in the agricultural and fermentation processes. Here He simply did the process immediately. The 120 gallons of fine wine were His gift to the young couple. The first miracle—a transformation—pointed to the kind of transforming ministry Jesus would have (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). The **disciples put their faith in Him**. This initial faith would be tested and developed by a progressive revelation of Jesus, the *Logos*. At this point they did not understand His death and resurrection (John 20:8-9) but they did know His power. Jesus' move **to Capernaum** on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee **for a few days** marks an interlude in His life. Though Capernaum is northeast of Cana, **He went down** because of the decline in land elevation toward the sea. Capernaum became His home base (cf. Matt. 4:13; Mark 1:21; 2:1). From this point on He seemed to be alienated from His family (Mark 3:21, 31-35; John 7:3-5) and His hometown of Nazareth (Mark 6:1-6; Luke 4:14-30).

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Today's lesson is dramatically situated in a wedding, but the focus of the story is not the bride or the groom. In fact, we don't even know their names or anything about them. But that's not important since the wedding serves only as a backdrop to Jesus' first miracle. The Old Testament is loaded with wedding language. Some of it is literal (example: Genesis 29:22-28, lesson 5), and some is figurative (example: Psalm 19:5). Some is positive (example: Isaiah 62:5), and some is negative (example: Jeremiah 7:34). A wedding was always a big deal in the world of the Bible, and some of Jesus' teachings drew on imagery from wedding celebrations (see Matthew 9:15; 22:2-14; 25:1-3; Luke 12:35, 36; 14:7-11). Jesus used such illustrations because marriage celebrations were a well-known and popular feature of village life, allowing a pause in the grind of a difficult existence that required long hours of work. Weddings were cherished occasions. There were variations in the way village weddings were celebrated, but a regular feature was a large, festive meal, where the guests were treated to abundant food and drink. Dancing and singing of traditional songs were also staples. The cost of hosting such an event was high, and the bridegroom might hire a coordinator or steward to manage things. Since customs of honor and status naturally led to comparisons with other wedding celebrations, no bridegroom would have wanted to be seen as miserly for scrimping on this very public event. Villages had long corporate memories! Instead, the tendency was to provide a wedding feast so lavish that the bridegroom would be thought of as a generous person who met his village's expectations in abundant ways.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Invitation (John 2:1-2)

- 1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.
- 2 Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.

Family involvement (1)

Involvement of family to display kindness (Ruth 3:9-11)

9 "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer." 10 "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. 11 And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character.

Involvement of family by taking up for one another (Gen 34:25-27)

25 Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male. 26 They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword and took Dinah from Shechem's house and left. 27 The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and looted the city where their sister had been defiled.

Involvement of family to share in service (Mark 15:40-41)

40 Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. 41 In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Involvement of family in passing on of faith (2 Tim 1:5)

5 I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

Christian involvement (2)

Involvement through building one another up (Rom 15:1-2)

15 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

Involvement through bearing with one another in love (Eph 4:2)

2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Involvement through forgiving one another (Col 3:13)

13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Involvement through sharing one another's suffering (Heb 13:1-3)

13 Keep on loving each other as brothers. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. 3 Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

The Crisis (John 2:3-5)

3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."

4 Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."

5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

Needs not met (3)

Do not worry about needs not being met, seek God's kingdom (Matt 6:31-34)

31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

The blameless in times of need will be able to endure (Ps 37:18-19)

18 The days of the blameless are known to the Lord, and their inheritance will endure forever. 19 In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty.

God does not withhold any good thing from His people in times of need (Ps 84:11)

11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

In times of need learn to be content (Phil 4:10-13)

10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Bad timing (4)

There is a time for everything, including bad things (Eccl 3:1)

3 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

At the proper time, God will provide a harvest if we don't give up (Gal 6:9)

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

We must at all times be prepared (Matt 25:5-10)

5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. 6 "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'" 7 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'" 9 "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'" 10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

We need to keep watch because we don't know the time of Jesus' return (Matt 24:42-46)

42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. 45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

Need for guidance from Jesus (5)

Guidance into the truth (John 16:13)

13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

Guidance into the unity of the faith (Eph 4:11-15)

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become

mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Guidance that is always available (Ps 48:14)

14 For this God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.

Guidance to follow Jesus (Matt 16:24-25)

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

The Miracle (John 2:6-8)

6 Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece.

7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it.

Using existing resources (6)

By being content with what you have (Phil 4:12)

12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

By working hard with your own hands (1 Cor 4:12)

12 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it;

By depending on God's grace (2 Cor 12:9)

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

By realizing that God will never forsake you (Heb 13:5)

5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Requires obedience (7-8)

Obedience that is consistent with God's will (Isa 58:6-9)

6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. 9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

Obedience that delights God (1 Sam 15:22)

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Obedience that is from humble, praying, repentant people of God (2 Chron 7:14)

14 If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Obedience that is bold and steadfast (Dan 3:16-18)

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

The Result (John 2:9-12)

9 When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom.

10 And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!"

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

12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

Experience is necessary (9)

Experiences that can be used to help others (2 Cor 1:3-4)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Experiences that changes one's life (Acts 9:1-6)

9 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Experiences that may be compelled (Mark 15:21)

21 A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

Experiences that help us understand what God wants us to do (Acts 10:9-20)

9 About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. 12 It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth

and birds of the air. 13 Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." 14 "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." 15 The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." 16 This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. 17 While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. 18 They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. 19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. 20 So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

Experiences that cannot be avoided (Jonah 1:15-2:1)

15 Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. 16 At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him. 17 But the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights. 2:1 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God.

Always do your best (10)

Do your best by working with all your heart (Col 3:23)

23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,

Do your best by doing whatever the situation requires (1 Cor 7:24)

24 Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.

Do your best by serving wholeheartedly (Eph 6:7)

7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men,

Give God the glory (11-12)

Give God the glory as part of our thanksgiving (2 Cor 4:15)

15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

Give God the glory because in all things God should be praised (1 Peter 4:11)

11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Give God the glory because we are owned by Him (1 Cor 6:20)

20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Give God the glory because we are to give God the glory in all things that we do (1 Cor 10:31)

31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

This miracle at Cana of Galilee has much to teach us today. Allow me to make some observations, and suggest some implications and applications for us today.

First of all, this is the first of our Lord's miracles. John calls it “**the beginning of signs**” in verse 11. Liberal scholarship is unwilling to take the words of Scripture at face value. They do not believe this was a miracle at all. They explain the story this way: There was a wedding, and they were running out of wine. Jesus told the servants to serve water when the wine ran out. This was like a child's make-believe tea party. To try to play down the embarrassing situation, the head steward tastes the water that is served in place of the wine and says (in good humor), “Good wine!” Then, someone else at the celebration catches the spirit of the moment and adds, “Yes, this is the best wine yet!” I prefer to take John's account literally. This was a miracle. Jesus turned water—ceremonial cleansing water—into the best wine men ever drank.

*Second, while this miracle **appears** to be an exercise of supernatural power that our Lord is reluctant to perform, but which He does because of His mother's persistence, it is not.* I believe it is correct to observe that, in the Gospels, our Lord is often not as eager to perform miracles as others are to have Him do so. He knows the limitation of such displays of power, as we shall see at the end of this chapter. Jesus' reluctance is not a resistance to helping this couple in need, but a concern that His mother understand that their relationship has changed forever, and that therefore His calling is not to do her bidding, as though she has an inside track with God. He also is concerned that He fulfill His Father's plan at the divinely appointed time, rather than in His mother's time-frame. He knows it is not yet time for Him to make a public display of His power, by which He publicly presents Himself as the promised Messiah. Those today who are overly eager to see God perform miracles (some almost insist upon them) should consider this fact carefully. Jesus is not as eager to perform miracles as others are to see Him do so.

Third, this miracle was not a “necessity,” but rather a “luxury.” Stop and consider this fact for a moment. This miracle is not like some of the other miracles Jesus performed, where an individual has suffered for years, or a child's life hangs in the balance. This is not an emergency situation which demands immediate and dramatic action on our Lord's part.

Years ago, when our family visited our good friends in Canada, we received a phone call from the U.S. while we were out. We were told the call came from someone with a strong accent. Since there is no way for me to reflect sounds (especially accents) in print, if you can switch your mind to “Swedish mode,” you may be able to “hear” the conversation as I did. When I called our home, where a Swedish couple was staying in our absence, Schel answered. “Bob, we've had a tragedy here ... Carmen is dead.” Carmen was our little poodle, and we liked her a lot. She had gotten outside and was run over by a passing car. We were sad, but this was not a tragedy. We did not feel obligated to cut our trip short and rush home for the “funeral.” Similarly, running out of wine was a problem, but it was not a tragedy. *Jesus' first miracle was the solution to a non-critical problem,* though I am sure that in the newlywed couple's minds, and perhaps in Mary's, the problem was a little more crucial than my assessment of the situation. But a crisis it was not.

There is a lesson to be learned from this miracle. *God is concerned with our “non-critical” problems.* Prayer is not like calling 911. Some may have the idea that God is like the President of the United States—a person with many (too many) demands on His time, so that He cannot possibly respond to them all. They may think of God as sitting at a large heavenly desk with an array of telephones before him which are all ringing with “prayer requests,” and He is busy answering them all. Who are we to “bother” God with our problems? If this is our idea of God, we are wrong. God is all-powerful and all-knowing. He is never overtaxed by our calling upon Him for help.

He is also a compassionate and merciful Father, who cares about His children. God is never annoyed when we come to Him with our small problems. Continuing the analogy of “bothering” a busy President, God does not look upon our “calls” (prayers) to Him as interruptions, as if someone were calling the President for the time and temperature. We are God's children. I can tell you that a President who loves his child will (or should) gladly suffer the interruption of something that greatly concerns his child when he or she interrupts their father.

I am greatly encouraged that our Lord's first miracle is one that many would consider non-essential. Later in our Lord's ministry, His disciples begin to act like our Lord's “secret service,” shooing away little children and

people whom they consider to be a bother to the Savior—and Jesus rebukes them for doing so. God cares about the little things in our lives. I am reminded of the story of the “lost ax head” in 2 Kings 6, where Elisha retrieves an ax head for one of the sons of the prophets. Many have tried to spiritualize this text to make it relevant. I believe it is very relevant: God cares about lost ax heads, and lost car keys and flat tires ... God cares about the little things that affect His children.

Fourth, this miracle is a lot like some of my jokes—most people in attendance just didn’t “get it.” It would seem that Jesus would want everyone to know what He was doing. He could have called for everyone’s attention, announcing to all that He was about to turn water into wine. He could have been much more dramatic, waving His hands over the waterpots, and then personally presenting the “good wine” to the head steward. In fact, Jesus does not seem to even touch the waterpots or the wine. He simply gives instructions to the servants to fill the pots and to serve the contents. If you had interviewed the head steward or any of the guests and asked what they thought of the celebration, they probably would have said: “Oh, it was a really nice celebration, and the wine at the last was really something.” Most of the people never knew a miracle had taken place. It seems that only Mary, the servants, and the disciples were aware of what happened. John tells us that because of this miracle, the disciples believed in Him (verse 11). My impression is that the servants knew “what” happened, but they were not sure exactly “how” it happened, so they simply kept quiet, scratching their heads with wonder.

Minimizing the visibility of this first display of our Lord’s power is by design. Everything our Lord did in transforming the water into wine was intended to minimize His exposure. Done in this way, our Lord was able to perform the miracle without violating His Father’s will concerning “**His time**.” It was not yet the moment for our Lord to publicly display His power and glory. Thus, He performed the miracle privately, in a way that conformed to God’s timing. In one sense, there are two miracles here in these first verses of John 2. The first is the transformation of water into wine. The second is accomplishing this miracle in a way that was not apparent to everyone.

Most likely, this is the way many miracles occur today. They occur in ways that seem so natural many do not even recognize them as supernatural. Perhaps an illustration would be helpful. As I was about to graduate from seminary a number of years ago, it came time for me to make the decision about where I would be going to minister. I had a couple of possibilities, but there was one I really did not want to consider, largely because of where the ministry would be. It was the one place in all the world I did not want to be. But God worked in my heart to the point that I relented and expressed to Him my willingness to serve Him even in that place. A church in that city had contacted me and expressed a desire to pursue the possibility of my ministry with them in that place. At the same time, I also had to make a decision about continuing in my current ministry, where I did want to be. Because I had to make a commitment within a certain period of time, I set a kind of deadline. If God wanted me to go to the other place—the place I preferred not to go—then that church would have to contact me again before the deadline passed. They did not, and I made the commitment to stay where I was. Only a few days later, a letter arrived in the mail from the “other church.” Interestingly, the letter had been mailed a month earlier, and from the marks on the letter, I could see it had been many places—except our mailbox. Somehow, the letter was not delivered on time, even though it was mailed to the correct address. Some might very easily say this was just a Post Office blunder. But I believe it was providential—a miracle—or, as one of my friends used to say, “another one of those *strange* coincidences.”

Fifth, notice especially how this miracle “manifested our Lord’s glory.” This is what John tells us: “This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, **and manifested His glory**; and His disciples believed in Him” (John 11, emphasis mine).

This is a rather interesting statement, because it seems inconsistent with what we have just observed. How could our Lord’s glory have been manifested when so few even knew a miracle had been performed? The answer to our question may be answered in chapter 1:

10 He was in the world, and the world was created through him, but **the world did not recognize him**. 11 He came to what was his own, **but his own people did not receive him**. 12 But to all who have received him—

those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God’s children 13 —children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God. 14 Now the Word became flesh and lived among us. **We saw his glory**—the glory of the only One, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father (John 1:10-13, emphasis mine).

Paul’s words to the Philippians may help to clarify what John has told us:

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus was God. He was in the beginning with God. He actively participated in the creation of this world (John 1:1-5). He was the true Light, the Light of the world, but the world did not know Him (John 1:6-11). The disciples beheld His glory, but the vast majority of those who saw and heard Him did not really see Him for who He was; they did not behold His glory.

This matter is taken up later on in John’s Gospel, but let me briefly turn your attention to an important text in John: “I glorified you on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory I had with you before the world was created” (John 17:4-5). Our Lord had great glory in heaven, and this visible glory He set aside to come to the earth in human flesh. He glorified God by His humility and obedience, which culminated in His sacrificial (and humiliating) death. Because of this, the Father has given Him even greater glory. That glory will be openly and visibly manifested at His Second Coming, and in heaven (“**glory**”).

My point is this: I fear we have a distorted definition of “glory,” very much like our Lord’s disciples had in the Gospels. We wrongly think that if the glory of God is present, it will be in some dramatic display of power, one that is visible and spectacular, one that is seen and acknowledged by all. Let me remind you that the glory of God was manifested in this miracle, even though few recognized it as such. We may be looking for the wrong kind of “glory.” All too often in the “triumphalism” of the New Testament church (i.e., Corinth) and in the church today, we look for the wrong kind of glory. *The glory of God, as I understand the Scriptures, is manifested in and through the saints as they—like their Savior—live humbly and suffer patiently for the sake of Christ and the Gospel* (see 1 Peter 2; also 2 Corinthians 3 and 4).

Sixth, this miracle is called a “sign.” Various terms are used in the New Testament to designate miracles. Of this term D. A. Carson says,

The New Testament uses several words to denote what we call ‘miracles.’ One of the most common, *dynamēis* (‘mighty works’) is not found in John; another, *terata* (‘wonders,’ ‘portents,’ ‘miracles’) is found only when linked with *semeia* (‘signs’), as in ‘signs and wonders’; but this combination is found only once in the Fourth Gospel (4:48). John prefers the simple word ‘signs’: Jesus’ miracles are never simply naked displays of power, still less neat conjuring tricks to impress the masses, but *signs*, significant displays of power that point beyond themselves to the deeper realities that could be perceived with the eyes of faith. Jesus himself in this Gospel refers to his miracles and to his other activity as his ‘work’ or ‘works’ (e.g. 5:36; NIV ‘miracle(s)’ in 7:21; 10:25).

This transformation of water into wine is closely related to chapter 1. In the first few verses of this Gospel, John informs us that Jesus of Nazareth is the Logos, who was not only *with* God in the beginning, but *was* God in the beginning. He is the Creator, who brought all that is into existence. Is it any great wonder that we should see Jesus “creating” wine from water, just as He once created the cosmos from chaos? Are we surprised that the disciples beheld His glory through this miracle when, in chapter one, the Apostle John writes, “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth**” (John 1:14)?

This miracle, as the other signs of the Gospel of John, teaches us about the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose is simple: that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that in believing you might have eternal life (John 20:31). Do you believe? There is no more important decision in life than what you believe about the person and work of Jesus Christ. He alone is God manifested in human flesh. He alone is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, who alone can forgive your sin.

Seventh, in this first miracle of our Lord, Jesus takes something not so great and turns it into something very wonderful. He takes that which is the cause of drudgery and makes it the source of great delight. The Old Testament Law required various kinds of washings. All of these were to demonstrate to the Israelites how deeply sinful and unclean they were, and thus how unfit to enter into God's presence. These washings were drudgery, yet the Israelites were to do them in obedience to God's law. By the time legalistic Judaism added even more washings, Judaism was a laborious religion. Jesus took this ceremonial cleansing water and made it into wine. Jesus took that which was a pain and made it into a pleasure. Jesus took that which Jews would have found unfit to drink, and He made of it the best wine that has ever passed the lips of man.

What a picture this is of the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old, of grace to law. *Because He came and perfectly fulfilled the law, meeting all of its requirements, our Lord was uniquely qualified to die for sinners on the cross of Calvary.* The salvation He procured through His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary makes it possible for men to leave the drudgery behind and to enter into the joy of His salvation.

Our Lord is able to take that which is less than desirable (for drinking, at least) and make it into a vintage wine, the finest man has ever tasted. He is able to take fallible men like Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael and make them into apostles. He is able to take the “**weak and foolish things of this world**”—*people like us—and transform us so that people marvel at God's grace and power.* What a wonderful Savior!

Eighth, Jesus not only produces something beautiful and blessed in this miracle, but something bountiful. The wine Jesus created was the best ever, but He did not create a small quantity. He produced much more than was needed. Can you imagine the joy of this married couple, who may have been poor, being left with over 100 gallons of the finest wine ever? When Jesus fed the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21) and again the 4,000 (Matthew 15:32-39), there were plenty of leftovers (14:20; 15:37). God's blessings are always bountiful. “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38).

God's goodness and grace abounds to His children; they are without measure. What a wonderful Savior!

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/first-sign-jesus-turns-water-wine-john-21-11>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Have you noticed how churches treat claims of miracles differently? Churches that can't seem to say enough about miracles have mottoes like, “Expect a miracle,” or “This is a place of miracles.” These can be exciting places, where the Spirit of God is said to be moving dynamically and frequently. However, some of the members of these churches may feel left out because they are suffering and no miracles come into their lives. Other churches feel like places where miracles would be unwelcome and embarrassing. Faith is a rational matter in these churches, and the Christian life is based on obedience, not signs and wonders. Don't expect a miracle, because “God helps those who help themselves” (a saying mistakenly attributed to the Bible). We gain clarity when we understand the purpose of miracles from the Bible's perspective. Miracles were not just Jesus' way of helping the helpless. They were a way for him to show his divine glory and bring unbelievers to faith as a result. Sadly, that did not always happen. Even resurrections did not compel everyone to believe (Luke 16:31; John 11:43-54). Doubtless there were scoffers at the wedding in Cana when the story got out about the water turned to wine. But hearts that acknowledge miracles “belong to those . . . who have faith and are saved” (Hebrews 10:39).

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. It is possible to participate in the world's activities without becoming part of its evil system (John 2:1-2)
2. Followers of Jesus know how to reach out for Him in troubled times (vss. 3-4)
3. Christians should always be willing to follow Jesus' instructions (vss. 5-8)
4. The best resolution occurs whenever Jesus is involved (vss. 9-10)
5. A manifestation of the power of God can lead to true belief in God (vs. 11)
6. When a person becomes a believer in Jesus, he or she will follow Him (vs. 12)