

# Gospel of John Study Notes

## John 2 – Part 1

The Gospel of John, Chapter 2, contains two events that mark the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry from John's perspective.

- John 2:1-12, Jesus Changes Water into Wine
- John 2:13-25, Jesus Clears the Temple Courts

## Jesus Changes Water into Wine

John immediately follows the calling of the first few disciples (including himself) by introducing Jesus as one who attends very common events. In this case, Jesus (and his earthly mother, Mary) are part of a wedding in Cana. It turns out that Cana is close to Nazareth and is the home of Nathanael (John 1:45-51, 21:2).

- Weddings were important events in historical Jewish culture. We could learn a lot from how they honored the families involved. Marriage meant two families were united. The week-long event is meant to be one of great celebration beyond the bride and groom.
- The problem: they ran out of wine far too soon! The solution is completely unexpected – the first “sign” of John's Gospel account: *Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.* (John 2:6). Simple math: 120 to 180 gallons of wine!

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*What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. – John 2:11*

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- John uses the term, “**sign**” rather than “**miracle**.” Why is that important?
- What changed about the disciples' perception of Jesus?



## John 2:1-12

New International Version

### Jesus Changes Water Into Wine

<sup>1</sup>On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup>and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup>When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

<sup>4</sup>"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

<sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

<sup>6</sup>Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

<sup>8</sup>Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, <sup>9</sup>and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside <sup>10</sup>and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

<sup>11</sup>What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

<sup>12</sup>After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

## Notes from NIV Application Commentary Regarding John 2:1-12<sup>1</sup>

The key here is to see that while John is using historical material, he is organizing this material topically (or theologically) in order to give an interpretative presentation of Jesus. The backdrop of each presentation is cultural and religious themes from Judaism.

The story of Cana, therefore, is far more than a story about a wedding and some wine. It is a story that carries remarkable symbolism for Jews and their Messiah. Moreover, it is a story that makes a sweeping commentary on the world into which Jesus is coming. “They have no wine” is not simply a comment by Mary about the panic of the wedding’s host. ***It is a theological statement about the Judaism that is now meeting its Messiah in his very first miracle.***

These are not merely jars for holding water. The note that they are stone is a signal that they are for Jewish purification washings (see Mark 7:1–4). Clay jars could become ritually contaminated and have to be destroyed (Lev. 11:33); but stone jars, according to rabbinic law, could not.

Or more important, the wine that has been served already is exhausted and Jesus’ new wine is replacing it. “You have saved the best [wine] till now” is thus a theological statement about Jesus and the relative merits of the religious environment he has come to fulfill.

John expects that at the end of chapter 2, we will pause and reflect on both this story in Jerusalem and the story of Cana. In each episode, similar themes challenge us, and we are invited to contrast them. Cana is in the north (Galilee); Jerusalem is in the south (Judea).<sup>26</sup> Cana offered stone jars (for purification) and now Jesus has challenged a stone temple (for sacrifice). Cana was out of wine and the temple was likewise filled with the wrong thing. Jesus’ solution in each case is to provide an alternative: He will be the giver of new wine and will become a new temple.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Wilkins, Michael J. NIVAC Bundle 6: Gospels, Acts (The NIV Application Commentary). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

## Notes from the NIV Application Commentary – The Structure of John’s Gospel<sup>2</sup>

[The Gospel of John] is divided into two main parts:

1. the Book of Signs (chs. 1–12), where Jesus works public “signs” conveying to Judaism the nature of his identity;
2. and the Book of Glory (chs. 13–21), where Jesus interprets the “hour of glorification,” namely, his departure through the cross.

Some scholars see this division anticipated in 1:9. The **Book of Signs** describes how the light shines in the darkness (1:9a), while the **Book of Glory** tells how the darkness attempts and fails to overcome it (1:9b).

Recognizing [these] as each episode unfolds will add meaning and delight as we study them. A brief outline of the episodes helps to make clear John’s literary agenda:

### Institutions in Judaism (chs. 2–4)

- For instance, we saw that
- A wedding in Cana (2:1–12)
- The temple in Jerusalem (2:13–25)
- A rabbi in Jerusalem (3:1–21)
- A well in Samaria (4:1–42)

### Festivals in Judaism (chs. 5–10)

- Sabbath (5:1–47)
- Passover (6:1–71)
- Tabernacles (7:1–9:41)
- Hanukkah (10:1–39)

Following the festival section in the **Book of Signs**, it only remains for John to provide a parabolic episode about life, death, and resurrection, namely, the story of Lazarus, which mirrors the fate of Jesus (chapter 11) and after which Jesus’ death is planned (11:45ff).

Finally, we see in chapter 12 Jesus’ preparation for death through the anointing of Mary, the plot to kill Lazarus and, by extension, Jesus (12:9ff), Jesus’ final entry to Jerusalem (12:12ff), and his final public plea (12:27ff).

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<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, Michael J.; Garland, David E.; Bock, Darrell L.; Burge, Gary M.; Fernando, Ajith. NIVAC Bundle 6: Gospels, Acts (The NIV Application Commentary) . Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.