

Subject: Christ's First Miracle

Scripture: John 2:1-12

The Gospel of John is both simple enough for a new Christian to understand and profound enough for a Bible scholar to devote a lifetime of study. Its words are simple, but its truths are profound. Someone said the John is like a pool of water shallow enough for a child to wade in and deep enough for an elephant to swim in.

This is the story of Christ's first miracle and it is not found in the other Gospels. We use the word "miracle" to describe many things. Someone scores a game-winning touchdown and we say it was a miracle. Someone escapes from a terrible accident and we say it was a miracle. Sometimes we speak of a common, but impressive event as a miracle. For example, the birth of a baby is common event that points to power of God that is anything but common. The Bible speaks of a miracle as an act of God that is above and beyond the common laws of nature. A miracle is something that is not natural, but clearly supernatural. A miracle can only be explained by God's intervention and His supernatural power. Miracles validated Jesus as the Son of God. The Bible uses several words for miracles (signs, wonders, powers). One of the unique features of John's Gospel is that he records eight miracles and John uses the word "signs" (miracles that contain a message):

1. Turning water into wine (2:1-11)
2. Healing the official's son (4:46-54)
3. Healing the lame man (5:1-9)
4. Feeding the five thousand (6:1-14)
5. Walking on the water (6:15-21)
6. Healing the blind man (9:1-7)
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:35-44)
8. Providing the catch of fish (21:6-11)

These signs were selected from the many miracles Jesus performed and they were chosen for with a special purpose in mind, ***John 20:30-31***³⁰ *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:*³¹ *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.* Notice three words: signs, believe, and life. The Gospel was written so that people would believe in Christ and have eternal life. John's Gospel proves that Jesus is God's Son and clear evidence is given to persuade the reader or the hearer to believe in Him and be saved.

The Gospel of John is a book of contrasts. It reveals the conflict between believers and unbelievers and the consequences of life and death. Four things stand out in this story: the marriage, the mother, the miracle, and the message.

THE MARRIAGE IN CANA

Cana was a little village about nine miles north of Nazareth. It was the hometown of Nathanael, one of Christ's first followers (Jn. 21:2). This was actually a marriage feast, similar to a reception after a wedding ceremony. Jesus was invited to this event and took part in a happy celebration. The festivities often lasted for a whole week. How would you like to provide for a week-long wedding reception? How would you like to pay for it? Well something terrible happened, they ran out of wine. At a time of joy and celebration this was a serious problem and a great embarrassment to the family.

Surely the rich meaning of marriage was in mind as John recorded this event. The relationship between God and His people Israel was described by the prophet Hosea as the relationship of husband and wife. The prophet Isaiah described the fullness and blessing of the future Messianic kingdom as God rejoicing over His people as a bridegroom rejoicing over his bride and the land of God's people will be called Beulah land (married). The apostle John later recorded in the Revelation when the marriage of the Lamb takes place. It was quite fitting that Jesus began His ministry of miracles at a marriage feast.

THE MOTHER OF JESUS

This was Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was a key person in the story. She was aware of the situation and told Jesus about the problem: "They have no wine" (vs. 3). Literally, she said: "The wine has failed or run out." She knew that He could take care of the problem. Note that Mary did not tell Jesus what to do. She just reported the problem. Christ's response may seem strange (vs. 4), but there is no disrespect. His statement to Mary was not rude or unkind. In other words, the natural mother-son relationship that existed for the firsts 30 years of Jesus' life was over and now was a transition stage with the beginning of His ministry. From now on the focus would be on His relationship with God the Father. Jesus made it clear that He must do what the Father sent Him to do. He was on God's timetable and everything in His life must follow that divine schedule ("mine hour" vs. 4; Jn. 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27:13:1; 17:1).

This story is a picture what happens in our lives. Our resources eventually run out. Our money runs out (or our health or our friends). Remember the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15? He had a big inheritance from his father, but his money eventually ran out and he was eating in the pig pen. God allows us to run out so we will run to Him for help. Our emergency is His opportunity. Mary saw the need and ran to Jesus for help.

THE MIRACLE OF TURNING WATER INTO WINE

This was the first of Jesus' miracles. Mary advised the servants to do whatever Jesus told them to do. She trusted Him to do what was best. He had the wisdom to know what to do and the ability to do it. The miracle involved six water pots made of stone. The Jews used them for ceremonial washing. To eat with unwashed hands was not tolerated. These were large containers with each one holding about 20-30 gallons. They must have been empty because Jesus told the servants to fill them with water. They obeyed and filled them up to the brim. Then an amazing miracle took place: Jesus turned the water into wine, the best kind of wine. The wedding feast continued, everyone was satisfied, and the master of ceremonies or head waiter was amazed. The servants understood what happened and the disciples knew what happened. This wonderful miracle accomplished two things:

- ✓ This miracle revealed Christ's glory

This was a time for Jesus to display His divine power. In the incarnation God entered this world in a human body, so you would expect Christ to do supernatural things (Jn. 3:2). Jesus also displayed His marvelous grace. Such a large amount of wine was more than enough to last for the rest of the wedding celebration. ***John 1:14*** *And the Word was made 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.*

- ✓ This miracle increased the disciples' faith

Their faith was confirmed and strengthened. They believed in Christ, not just in the miracles. I want to say a word about the fact that Jesus turned the water into wine. Was this alcoholic wine or non-alcoholic fruit juice? First of all, if that is the big issue for you, then you've missed the point. Second, wine was usually diluted with water and used as a common beverage. The alcohol content would not have caused drunkenness. Third and most important, we can be sure that Jesus would never cause anyone to sin. He would never cause anyone to stumble or be drunk. In fact, the Bible strictly warns about the dangers of alcohol.

Proverbs 20:1 *Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.* **Proverbs 23:31-32** ³¹ *Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.* ³² *At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.* **Proverbs 31:4-5** ⁴ *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:* ⁵ *Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.* **Habakkuk 2:15** *Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!*

THE MEANING OF THE MIRACLE

The word for miracles in verse 11 is *semeion* (signs). By using this word, John stressed that the miracles were not just displays of God's power, but they conveyed a deeper meaning. These were miracles with a message. What lessons did Jesus teach through this miracle?

- ✓ Jesus provides much better things than the world can offer. See John 2:10. The world offers the best at first and then things get worse, but with Jesus the best is yet to come. He always saves the best until last.
- ✓ Jesus replaces our emptiness and disappointment with true satisfaction and joy. He brought internal satisfaction (wine) in place of religious ritual (the water pots used for ceremonial washing).
- ✓ Jesus graciously uses us to accomplish His purpose. The water turned to wine because the servants obeyed His command. Several of Jesus' miracles involved human cooperation: feeding of the 5,000 (Jn. 6), healing of the man born blind (Jn. 9), and the raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11). He used people to pass out loaves and fishes, to wash away mud from blinded eyes, and to roll away the stone from a grave. Notice that the servants and Jesus' disciples knew what happened, but others did not understand. When you are involved in His work, you see things that others don't see.

Mary gave the greatest advice that has ever been given: "Whatsoever He says to you, do it."