



Water Turned to Wine

John 2:1-12

Notes: The *MacArthur Study Bible* by John MacArthur was used as a reference in developing this Bible Study. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

2:1–11 John relates the first of 8 great miracles performed by Jesus to demonstrate His deity. Each of the 8 miracles were different; no two were alike... Why is the turning of water into wine significant?
Only God can create something from nothing.

2:1 Why did John tell us this event happened on the third day since the calling of Philip and Nathanael?
This gives us a sense that a lot happened in a short period of time, that it was not long before the disciples learned the nature of Jesus. Indeed, John related this idea in the last sentence of his gospel...

John 21:25 - And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

What was Jesus doing in Cana?

Jesus was there to attend a wedding. Cana was a town about 9 miles from Nazareth.

What do we know about Jewish wedding celebrations during this time period?

Such a wedding celebration in Palestine could last for a week. Financial responsibility lay with the groom (vv. 9, 10). To run out of wine for the guests would have been an embarrassment to the groom and may have even opened him to a potential lawsuit from the relatives of the bride.

2:2 Who was invited to the wedding?

The mother of Jesus, Jesus Himself and His disciples were invited. The fact that Jesus, His mother, and His disciples all attended the wedding suggests that the wedding may have been for a relative or close family friend.

Who were the disciples that were probably with Jesus?

The disciples that accompanied Him are the 5 mentioned in chap. 1: Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and the unnamed disciple (1:35) who was surely John.

2:3 What potential catastrophe happened at the wedding celebration?

They ran out of wine.

Is this wine like we have today?

It was but probably did not have as high an alcohol content as today's wine does. In the ancient world wine was used to quench thirst without inducing drunkenness by being diluted with water to between one-third and one-tenth of its strength. Due to the climate and circumstances, even "new wine" fermented quickly and had an inebriating effect if not mixed. At Pentecost some people thought those speaking in foreign languages were drunk:

Acts 2:13 - Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

Because of a lack of water purification process, wine mixed with water was also safer to drink than water alone.

Is it a sin to drink wine?

Jesus certainly drank wine at the last supper. While the Bible condemns drunkenness, it does not necessarily condemn the consumption of wine. It is God who creates...

Ps 104:15 - ...wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart.

However some people can not tolerate any alcohol without it leading to their becoming drunk so we do not advocate drinking...

1 Cor 8:13 - ...lest I make my brother stumble.

Who alerted Jesus to the problem with the wine?

Mary, the mother of Jesus told Him about the wine.

2:4 Was Jesus being impolite to His mother by calling her woman?

The term is not necessarily impolite, but it does have the effect of distancing Jesus from His mother and her request. Perhaps, it has the equivalent of saying "ma'am." There was certainly some degree of reproach there.

Why would Jesus try to distance Himself from His mother?

Mary knew who Jesus was and was likely anxious for Him to make public that He was the Son of God. But Jesus had a plan for this that needed the proper preparation. Jesus would not be hurried into accelerating His plan even by His own mother.

What did Jesus mean by saying “My hour has not yet come?”

This phrase is used constantly to refer to Jesus’ death and exaltation (John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). Please note that the prophets characterized the messianic age as a time when wine would flow liberally (Jer. 31:12; Hos. 14:7; Amos 9:13, 14). Jesus was probably referring to the fact that the necessity of the cross must come before the blessings of the millennial age.

2:5 How did Mary respond to Jesus’ rebuke of her request?

Mary knew Jesus and so she knew He would do the right thing. She knew Him enough that He embodied the grace of God and that He would want to honor her request if it was rightly motivated. Mary wanted to see God glorified as much as she wanted to help the father of the groom...

Psalm 37:4 - Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

2:6-7 What did Jesus have the servants do?

Take the 6 water containers and fill them up with water.

What does it mean that the waterpots were made of stone?

This means they were ceramic as opposed to earthenware which were cheaper containers that did not meet their purification standards.

What is the significance of pointing out that the waterpots were stoneware?

This is more proof that the water was not “wine-flavored” which could have been the case if earthenware was used. Earthenware is more permeable than stoneware so wine previously in the containers could leach back into the water.

When did Jesus turn the water into wine?

After the servants had done what he told them to, filling up the 6 waterpots.

Is there any significance to there being 6 waterpots, why wasn’t it 5 or 7?

In the Bible, the number 6 is often symbolic of things pertaining to men. So I believe that the symbolism here is God’s redeeming work making people more valuable. As God turned water into wine, He is the one who turns common garden variety pagans into His children.

2:7-8 Why did Jesus use servants in performing this miracle? Why didn’t He just cause the jars to be filled with wine and not with water first?

- This is the pattern that God uses, seeing the Lord work a miracle usually requires a step of faith on our part first.

- God loves to honor His faithful with significant roles in His work. We are not indispensable but graciously included.
- God is also interested in relationship building which requires our participation.

2:8-10 What did the master of the feast think of the wine?

The master of the feast praised the bridegroom for serving the best wine later in the celebration.

Why was it praiseworthy to have the better wine served later in the wedding celebration?

Usually they served the good wine at the beginning of the celebration then the inferior wine later when people are less likely to notice due to their inebriation.

2:9-10 What do these verses tell us about how Jesus solves problems?

- When Jesus solves problems, the outcome is even better than expected.
- We should not try everything else first turning to Jesus last. Don’t save the best for last!

2:11 What did the Apostle John call the miracle of turning the water into wine?

John used the word "sign" here to refer to the miracles that God used to impart an understanding of deeper realities to those who observed them with eyes of faith. This word emphasized that the miracles were not merely displays of power but had a greater significance.

What were the results of these signs on the disciples?

The disciples came to believe in Jesus as a result of these signs...

John 3:2 - "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

What does it mean the disciples believed in Jesus?

This means that they believed that He was who He represented Himself to be: the Messiah, the only Son of God who was sent to bring salvation to Israel.

Is what the disciples believed about Jesus in the early days of His ministry different from what we believe today?

No, it is the same but we have the benefit of the completed New Testament which makes it clear that Jesus came not only to save Israel, but also the whole world.

2:12 What did Jesus do after the wedding feast?

Jesus spent a few days in Capernaum with his family and disciples.

What do we know about Capernaum?

Jesus went there quite frequently and performed many miracles there but despite this the people their refused to respond to the truth that He represented...

Matthew 11:23 - And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

Jesus cursed Capernaum and so it is nothing more than an archeological dig, it has not been rebuild as has most New Testament-era towns in Israel.