

John 2:11 *This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.*

When the apostle John reports the miracles of Jesus, he habitually refers to them as “signs”. The Greek word translated as “sign” here is *semeion*, which referred to a sign or token that distinguished a person or a thing from others.

- Miracles represented God’s accreditation that Jesus was sent from Him. ¹

The Wedding Feast

As we focus on John’s record of the very first sign that Jesus did, it was a sign that took place, surprisingly, at a wedding, and it seems almost profane in that it involved the transformation of water into wine for thirsty guests. ¹

Since Jesus, His disciples, and His mother were invited to this wedding, it was likely a family affair; one of their relatives was getting married. ³ In the ancient world, it was customary for a wedding feast to last as long as a week.

Joseph, Jesus’ earthly father, likely had been dead for some time. ³

John 2:4 And Jesus said to her, “**Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.**”

- In the Jewish culture of that time, “Woman” was a title of respect, a polite form of address. ¹

Literally, Jesus said “What is this to you to Me?” Telling her not to rush Him, Jesus was saying, “Don’t tell Me what to do in My earthly ministry.”

- Usually Jesus “hour” refers to the time of His suffering and death. ² He talked about the hour in which the Father would manifest His glory.

John 2:5 His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”

- No one ever received better instructions from anybody in all of history than these servants received from the mother of Christ when she told them to follow Jesus’ orders. ¹

John 2:6 *Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.*

In the Mideast, water pots made from mud have been used for millennia and are still used today. They are earthen vessels. But the Jews also made jars and vessels out of stone for the simple reason that water contained in these pots would not become contaminated with bits of dirt. Every Jew who came to this large wedding celebration had to go through a purification rite before he could enter. If nothing else, he had to wash his hands and his feet when he arrived for the wedding feast. These jars were there for this purpose. ¹

John 2

Jesus not only had turned water into wine, He had turned it into very good wine. Also, He potentially made 180 gallons of wine.

Many of us have been taught that the Jews drank wine in the Old Testament because the water was no good. Actually, the water was just fine. Wine was a special drink; it was reserved for special occasions. ¹

The two largest crops grown by the Old Testament Jews were grapes, from which wine was made, and olives, which were raised for their oil.

- The Jews saw wine as a gift of God. [*And wine which makes man’s heart glad*, Psalm 104:15a]. It seems impossible to deny that what Jesus created in those stone jars was fermented grape juice, or wine. ¹

Sources of Controversy

Liberals of the nineteenth century denied that Jesus turned water into wine because they didn’t believe in miracles and didn’t believe that Jesus did any actual miracles.

Some conservatives jump through just as many hoops because they’re embarrassed by this biblical text that indicates Jesus made wine. Their premise is that drinking wine is a sin.

- Jesus used wine when He instituted the Lord’s Supper. ¹

If you are convinced that Jesus made grape juice rather than wine, or if you are absolutely persuaded that one ought never to taste wine, then for you to drink wine would be a sin. ¹ [Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8]

- It is wrong to act against one’s conscience, even if the action is not opposed to God’s law. ¹

Some churches give the option of wine or grape juice in the Lord’s Supper. The outer ring of the communion tray holds cups of grape juice.

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- What we do know is that this story does not offer support for the idea that we should go to Mary and ask her to intercede for us, as the story is sometimes read in Roman Catholicism. ³

- It would be Jesus who would determine when to perform miracles and what miracles He would do. As our Sovereign, Jesus determines when and how to answer every prayer. ³

manifest *vt* : to make evident or certain by showing or displaying

- John concludes this account of Jesus’ first miracle by saying that it manifested the glory of Christ. ³

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The Cleansing of the Temple

All three of the Synoptic Gospels present the cleansing of the temple as an event that happened the last week of Jesus' life.¹

John presents Jesus' cleansing of the temple as an event that happened very early in His ministry. Following His first miracle in Cana, Jesus went to Capernaum, and then, a few days later, He went to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover, which served as the occasion for His cleansing of the temple.

- Sproul's position is that Jesus cleansed the temple *twice*.¹

When Jesus came to this Passover celebration, the first one during His public ministry, He was provoked to cleanse the temple by what He saw. He drove out the merchants, drove out the livestock, turned over the tables of the money changers, and so on.

So, was that the end of the problem? How long was it before those tables were upright once more and the money changers were back in business?

When Jesus came to Jerusalem for the Passover right before His death, and saw the same things going on that He'd condemned three years earlier, He took action to cleanse the temple again.

Legitimate Activities, Inappropriate Place

The court of the Gentiles had been transformed from a place of worship and prayer to a place of commerce.

John 2:14-16 *And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."*

If these activities had been going on outside the temple, there is every reason to believe that Jesus would have done nothing. Each of these activities was a service to the people who were coming to the temple.

- At the Passover, every pilgrim was required to sacrifice an animal.

The money changers were there because a temple tax had to be paid. Temple authorities were particular about what kind of coinage was acceptable – shekels³ of currency minted from the purest silver that could be found. Money changers received a commission that may have been as high as twelve percent.

Psalm 69:8-9 *I have become estranged from my brothers And an alien to my mother's sons. For zeal for Your house has consumed me, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.*

Psalm 69 is not usually considered to be a psalm that was prophetic about the coming Messiah. Instead, David was talking about himself. David says, "Because I have proclaimed Your word, O God, I have become a reproach in my own family. Because of my zeal for Your house, a zeal that consumes me, a passion that eats me up, I'm despised."¹

Jesus' disciples saw in Jesus the same thing David experiences in his life – a zeal for the house of God.

- Simply put, noise is not conducive to worship. God is particular about how he is to be approached in the sanctuary.¹

Imagine if you went into the church sanctuary to pray, but you couldn't focus your thoughts because of the loud and persistent bleating of sheep and goats.

The temple that was standing in Jesus' time had been under construction forty-six years and still wasn't finished. It was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.

John 2:19 *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."*

Many evangelical Christians are waiting for the Jews to build a new temple, seeing that as a sign of the end of the age. They fail to understand that the temple has already been rebuilt. Christ is the temple, the locus of the living presence of God in the midst of His people, and the rebuilding of the temple took place on the day of His resurrection.¹

- God says through Paul [Acts 17:30-31] that the resurrection of Christ is the supreme sign, and that He will do it only once.¹

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- Worship is not something we are allowed to do as we please. Those who do so should fear that Christ will come with a whip of cords and drive them from His sanctuary.¹

¹ *John (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary)*, R. C. Sproul, 2009, pp. 19-31

² *The Reformation Study Bible*, pp. 1945-7

³ *Tabletalk* magazine, January 2018, Robert Rothwell, pp. 50-55