



Turning Water into Wine

John 2:1-11

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Introduction: The Seven Signs

- John organizes the first half of his gospel around seven signs.
 - Turning Water into Wine (2:1-11)
 - The Healing of the Official's Son (4:46-54)
 - The Healing of the Paralyzed Man (5:1-15)
 - The Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:1-14)
 - Jesus Walking on Water (6:15-21)
 - The Healing of the Blind Man (9:1-41)
 - The Raising of Lazarus from the Dead (11:1-57)
- John's use of the word "signs" to describe these miracles indicates that they point to something beyond themselves.
 - These signs describe what happens when the Word becomes flesh (1:14).
 - They also fulfill Jesus' promise to Nathanael in 1:50, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that."
 - Ultimately, John describes the purpose of the signs in 20:30-31: "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

The First Sign: Turning Water into Wine (John 2:1-11)

The Crisis: A wedding runs out of wine (2:1-4).

- The wine runs out at a wedding Jesus, his mother, and his disciples are attending (v 1).
- In notifying Jesus of the situation, Mary is asking him to do something about it (v 2).
 - Weddings were community wide events with great social significance.
 - To run out of wine during the celebration was a tremendous social faux pas and would bring great shame upon the host family.
 - Mary may have had a familial connection to the hosts. She likely knew that drawing Jesus' "attention to a need was a sure way of getting something done." (Bruce, 69).
- Jesus initially responds by telling Mary that his time has not yet come (v 3).
 - The word "woman" by itself in English can be pejorative. It carries no such connotation in the Greek.
 - Jesus is not hostile to his mother, but he is indicating that his public ministry will pull him away from family involvement in unique ways.
 - She had familial concerns in mind. Jesus' vocation was messianic in scope.

- The proper time for his messianic vocation to be publicly revealed had not yet come.

The Command: Do whatever he tells you (2:5-8).

- It is remarkable, and perhaps a bit humorous, that Mary ignores Jesus' protest and instructs the servants to "Do whatever he tells you" (v 5).
- Her words tip us off to part of the significance of this sign.
 - Mary does not know what Jesus will do, but whatever it is, it is worth heeding.
 - Obedience to Jesus' commands will lead to salvation. At the wedding, Jesus, the local boy, will save the day. But obedience to Jesus the Messiah will lead to the salvation of our souls.
- Jesus commands the servants to fill six ceremonial stone jars with water (vv 6-7).
 - These jars likely held water used for the ceremonial washing of hands.
 - John's words about their use indicate he is writing for a Gentile audience, but also point to the fact that Jesus is about to replace the entire Jewish ceremonial system with something far better.
- Jesus commands the servants to "draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet" (v 8). They do so, without tasting the liquid themselves. This itself is an act of great faith. Could they see the difference in the liquid? We don't know. Is Jesus setting them up for personal embarrassment? What will the Master say when he tastes water and expects wine?

The Miracle: You have saved the best till now (2:9-10).

- When the head steward tastes the liquid, the water has turned into the finest of wines.
 - He does not know where the wine has come from but compliments the wine to the bridegroom.
 - He notes that most people serve the best wine first and then, once people are a little tipsy, serve poorer quality fare. This groom has saved the best for last (v 10).
- The implication is clear, what Jesus brings is better than anything that has come before.
- Jesus is Lord over nature. Just as all things were made through him in the beginning, so too, will new creation come at his hand. That new creation will include not only the physical stuff of earth, but also the souls of men. Nicodemus will discover in the next chapter what is required for a man's nature to be transformed.

The Result: His disciples believed in him (2:11).

- John highlights that this is the first of the "signs through which [Jesus] revealed his glory."
- The result of this sign is that the disciples believed in him.
- John will not highlight every sign with this label, but all of the miracles in this book are to be understood in this way.

Sources:

Brown, Raymond E. *The Gospel According to John I-XII*. The Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday, 1966.
 Bruce, F.F. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1983.
 Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*. Revised. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1993.