

The 7 Signs of John's Gospel: The turning of water into wine 2:1-11

Introduction:

God's Holy Spirit selected seven signs from a very large number of miracles that Jesus performed during his ministry on earth to be recorded by the apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, in his Gospel. The reason these particular ones were chosen to be recorded in God's Word was this

³⁰ 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. **John 20:30-31**

It is my prayer as we progress through this series that each one of us would Experience LIFE by getting to know Jesus even better than we do now simply through growing in our belief in his name as the Son of God, our Saviour, the anointed One. We begin with the first sign. Let us turn to the New Testament and read in the Gospel of **John 2:1-11**

How long have you ever had to hold something in and not divulge what it is that you think you know to be true and apparent but what is yet to be revealed to others at a future date? To wait for something to happen that you know was going to happen one day but were not able or allowed to tell others about? It may be in regard to someone who is very dear to you such as a child or grandchild or close friend. No matter how good or great the thing is that you know, how able are you in keeping it quiet, not breaking the confidence while all the while feeling like you're practically going to burst trying to hold it in because you simply wanting to share what you know with others, with the world even. And then you arrive at a day and place and time in a situation where you simply cannot hold it back, hold it in any longer because the circumstances of life dictate your response will be to divulge at last what has remained unknown for so long! What is the longest period that you have ever lasted holding on to a piece of spectacular news? How about when you compare yourself against Mary?

For Mary it had been 30 years since the first angel arrived with the news that she would give birth to the Son of God, the Messiah, Saviour and Redeemer of Israel and the world. News which was confirmed by her husband to be Joseph at the time. News that the baby boy would be named Jesus because he would save people from their sins. Others too, including relations, shepherds, wise men and prophets during the pregnancy and following the birth also confirmed this truth.

Thirty years I've known the truth about my boy all the while loving him, caring for him, nurturing him along with his brothers and sisters and watching him grow into a man, becoming a carpenter trained by Joseph who has since died so Jesus has taken over the family business as the oldest male in the family. He has lived at home all the time not getting married. I know says Mary who Jesus really is, what his name means, and what he can do. I have held close this precious amazing knowledge like treasure, storing these thoughts away, not divulging to another soul as his mother. But things have changed now. Jesus had left home to journey south to see his second cousin John, to be baptised by him at the Jordan River. Surely the silence has been broken as John proclaimed "Look the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" And then there was the baptism itself where a voice from heaven, God his Father had spoken, "This is my Son whom I love, with him I am well pleased." And the Spirit had then descended on Jesus as he came up out of the water in the form of a dove filling Jesus, testifying to the fact that this was God's chosen and anointed One. Jesus has even called a handful of disciples on the quiet to follow him, but he's still not really saying or doing much as the Messiah, the Son of God. And here we all are now a few days later Jesus is back in Galilee at this wedding. And at this moment I cannot hold it in any longer. I have to act. I have to do something right now because the wine has run out. That's it. I've got no choice I'm intervening on behalf of this lovely young couple. Where is my son and his group, ahh there they are. Right, here we go....

"They have no more wine."

If you have ever desired knowledge of a sign that points you to God through Jesus, that he is involved in the lives of regular people and cares for them, then this first miracle is it. Jesus is ever present in our

daily lives and cares for us in our time of need just as he does for this young couple at this wedding in Cana. In what is about to transpire, Jesus through this inaugural sign is about to announce to the world just who he is and what he is about. It is interesting to note that Jesus is not at a funeral or out on the streets with the poor, the starving, the lame, the sick and infirmed or even the demon possessed. He's at a party, a wedding festival celebrating with family, friends and his new disciples laughing, making merry, eating and drinking, well at least until the wine runs out anyway, which was an incredibly serious matter because this was no minor social embarrassment in Jesus' time. In the Ancient near eastern culture it was the family's important responsibility when hosting such a festival to provide hospitality according to the socially accepted standard of the day which simply meant not running out of food or wine for any or all of your guests throughout the duration of the wedding feast which could last for up to one week, which is quite a big ask by today's standards. Because if you ran out of wine all that was left was water to drink which was not the first beverage of choice for such an occasion just like it would be at a party today. And as the Jewish saying went "Without wine there is no joy" although, drunkenness was an unacceptable disgrace too. So this young teenage couple were in huge trouble at the single most important festival of their lives. Running out of wine meant that they would suffer a lifelong humiliation because of the huge social embarrassment which would be brought upon the couple and their family along with the associated shame and guilt that would serve to stigmatise their lifelong marriage and not only that but the lives of their children and grandchildren as well because of how they would be remembered in their community throughout the generations of failing to met the required social standards regarding hospitality of the day.

With the wine all gone Mary decided that she had to do something for this couple, for this family was most likely related to her because of the sense of responsibility she held and her ability to order servants around. This was a time of great need and it was this mother's belief that her son could or should address this need and save this couple from what was almost a living fate worse than death.

"They have no more wine." To which Jesus replied,

“Woman why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come.”

Which on the face of it sounds rude, even a bit harsh to us, but he is not being hostile to her because this greeting “Woman” Jesus used to address women carries with it no rudeness or hostility when spoken in a nice tone which remains when he says “why involve me, what concern is that to you and to me?” Although he does make a point when he said his “hour has not yet come.” Jesus’ ‘hour’ points forward to his glorification which will be experienced through his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. And as far as Jesus is concerned no human being, not even his mother, can determine his “hour,” that is, the saving work he does to restore the relationship between humanity and God. God alone determines when and how Jesus’ “hour” becomes a reality in the world.

Even with this being the case his dear mother Mary does not respond directly to him. It is as if in an unspoken agreement on her part that she knows Jesus and believes he is to take the initiative to act to save this young couple which is why she tells the servants “Do whatever he tells you,” because Mary trusts in both Jesus’ desire and ability to address the need that has arisen and do it immediately.

And here it comes, his first sign, which is defined as an unusual occurrence that transcends the common course of nature. A sign that could be labelled as a wonder because it is a miracle by which God authenticates the man sent by Him which also proves that they are from God and their Word or message, what it is that they are trying to prove in their message is credible and from God.

To save the day Jesus orders the servants to fill the six stone jars to the brim with water and for them to draw it out and take it to the master of the banquet. By the time the master tastes the water it has already become the choicest wine.

So what does this miracle signify then?

Firstly Redemption, Jesus cares about the need of this young newlywed couple and saves them from social disgrace and devastation.

Secondly, the changing of water to wine as Jesus’ first public act in John, is the inaugural “sign” of God’s presence in the world through him.

Thirdly, the true Lord of the feast has arrived and he has brought with him the wine of joy. Jesus is no killjoy, he is the life of the party and here's the proof in this miracle. The large stone jars "Filled to the brim" nearly to overflowing. So if you're going to honestly interpret this miracle, what matters most is that a whole lot of water becomes a whole lot of wine. There's no missing the abundance of it and how it is the best wine which is a sign of redemption, a sign of joy and certainly a sign that God's presence now fills the world "up to the brim."

Fourthly, The master of the banquet does not seem to know where such choice wine came from, while the lowlier servants do. Knowing Jesus as the source of abundance makes one an "insider" within the community of believers, even if your social status prevents you from ever breaking into a higher social circle. And fifthly, The real master who served this superior wine, Jesus, has "now" appeared, ushering into the world God's abundant goodness and grace in a definitive way. This Sign centres on wine because abundant wine is symbolic of God's presence in this world and in the age to come at the heavenly banquet. The divine reality behind the miracle then is more important than the marvel of the miracle itself because of the action that it signifies.

For John, Jesus' miracles are "signs" that reveal the salvation, abundance, and new life now present in the world through Jesus, revealing Jesus' glory as God's Son through whom salvation enters the world which is to illicit a response from us. According to John, the proper response to such revelation is belief, just as the disciples demonstrate here v11. So the challenge remains, will you join Mary who already knew and believed in Jesus along with his recently called disciples who saw the sign, witnessed the miracle and choose today to believe when they "put their faith in him". Do this and you will experience life- Just believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and put your faith in him today and receive life, eternal life from him. Along with knowing that Jesus cares about you and what's going on in your life today and desires to fill afresh your life to the brim even overflowing with the wine of joy, his abundant presence of grace. Something which God does not expect us to bottle up, hold on to and keep to ourselves as a secret for the next

thirty years. Now is the time to be bursting with the desire to act and share this truth with others, overflowing with his joyful presence.

I will conclude today with the words of J.I. Packer who in his book 'God's Plans for You' wrote,

"The secret of joy for believers lies in the fine art of Christian thinking. It is by this means that the Holy Spirit, over and above his special occasional visitations in moments of joy, regularly sustains in us the joy that marks us out as Christ's. Our Lord Jesus wants our joy to be full. Certainly, he has made abundant provision for our joy. And if we focus our minds on the facts from which joy flows, springs of joy will well up in our hearts every day of our lives; and this will turn our ongoing pilgrimage through this world into an experience of contentment and exaltation of which the world knows nothing."