

TERRE SAINTE
Pour la Lecture
DE L'ÉVANGILE

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THE WEDDING AT CANA

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JOHN 2:1-12

Not every wedding ends up on America's Funniest Videos, but almost all of them have a memorable incident — the groomsman faints, the silly aunts are the flower girls, the preacher drops the ring. I've even seen both dogs and robots act as ring bearers. Unforgettable moments help us remember the event, usually with a smile. But in the wedding Jesus attended in John 2, the memorable event was quite embarrassing. The host ran out of wine!

Let's review a minute before we dive deeper into this true story. In Bible times, weddings were a series of events, beginning with the betrothal that legally established the bride and groom as married. The clock started and the groom had up to a year to prepare his bride's home, while the bride's family prepared her trousseau and filled her hope chest. Then the groom came (often unannounced) to collect his bride. Parading with the bridesmaids to their new home, they held a simple ceremony to ask God's blessings, then celebrated. The groom's father hosted the week-long party where the bride and groom were blessed by guests and gifts and dancing and feasting.

Jesus Goes to Weddings

Jesus, His mother, and His disciples were all invited to this wedding in Cana. Obviously, it was a big event! But the unthinkable happened. The host ran short of refreshments! Hosting a party but not providing enough food or drink for your guests would not only be embarrassing but also socially unacceptable. In Bible times, city officials could fine people for such an offense. Maybe the wedding host underestimated how many would come or how hungry they would be. Perhaps the party was so fun, no one wanted to leave. Maybe the host was not wealthy, and his resources gave out. We aren't told. We only know Mary was aware of the situation and asked Jesus to help.

Was this dilemma any of Mary's business? We aren't told (though many commentators speculate she was somehow responsible for the feast preparations). We at least know she was thoughtful about the need, and her response was to present it to Jesus on behalf of the host.

Something to consider:

1. Look up Cana on one of the maps in the back of your

Bible. The town is estimated to be five or six miles from Nazareth. We don't know who was getting married, but what's your guess? Consider that Jesus and His disciples were there. Consider that Mary was both aware and concerned about this embarrassing, in-hospitable failure of the host. Who might the bride have been? (We'll ask when we get to Heaven to see if you're right!)

2. Cana and this event are mentioned again in John 4:46. The only other biblical mention of Cana is in John 21:2. Which disciple was from Cana?

3. Some wise commentators have seen this wine shortage as a symbol of the spiritual thirst and need of first-century Judaism. The Old Testament uses wine (but never drunkenness) as an indicator of God's joyful blessings and provision (Psalm 104:15 and Proverbs 3:10). What would this infer about Jesus' ministry in the big picture? See Jesus' statements about new wine in Matthew 9:17 (and parallel passages in Mark 2:22 and Luke 5:37-38).

Before we talk about what happened next, stop and reflect on a couple of important truths. Jesus' presence at this wedding was an affirmation of the sanctity of marriage. Just as God blessed the first marriage in the Garden of Eden, He approved the practice in New Testament times. Both by His words (Matthew 19:5-6; Mark 10:7-8) and His actions, the Designer of marriage reaffirmed the truth that a man would leave his father and mother and become one with his wife. Jesus never married, but He approved of marriage and upheld its sacred bonds.

Second, Jesus came to the wedding. He came because He was invited (John 2:2). Not everyone reading this is married; that's clear. But if you are, have you invited Him into your marriage? Have you welcomed Him into your home and your relationship? Have you sought His blessing on the vows you have made to one another? Here's the truth: Jesus likes to come to weddings. He wants to be part of your marriage. He wants to heal hurts and restore connections. He wants to give direction and insight for your future. He wants to protect you from temptation and strengthen you for challenges. He longs to be the center of your home, the "three-fold cord" that is not easily broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12). He wants to promote peace, unity, and safety as you build a life together. Even if you've been married 75 years, He wants to be invited in. Don't wait a minute longer. Ask Him to your wedding.

And for those who have never married, here's what is true from God's Word. Jesus wants to be part of your family, too. He wants you to be His chosen loved one. When you welcome Him into your home, He will abide with you, long-term, never leaving you, ever. He is a Husband (Isaiah 54:5), a Father, and a Brother to His people — to you. That's a promise.

Something to consider:

Jesus is never a party crasher. He waits for your invitation. How does Revelation 3:20 picture this truth?

Jesus Responds to Our Needs

We get to listen in on a conversation between Jesus and His mother in John 2:3-4. Later in verse 11, we learn this was the first of Jesus' miracles (signs), which may explain part of the puzzle here. Why did Mary bring this problem to Jesus? What did she expect Him to do about the refreshment shortage? Did she think He would run to the store or quickly return home to their own cupboard? Did she think He had resources to provide more wine? Did she expect a miracle?

Something to consider:

1. Before His public ministry began, do you think Jesus had provided in such ways in His childhood home? We don't know, of course. But Mary understood Jesus' unique role as God's Son. She had been pondering things in her heart for decades at that point (Luke 2:19), connecting the dots from Scripture, the angels' words, the prophecies of those in the Temple, the preaching of John the Baptist, and the character of her Son. What else might have been going through Mary's thoughts?

2. What are Jesus' first miracles recorded in the other three gospels? Is there any significance to these "opening acts"?

Matthew 8:1-4

Mark 1:21-28

Luke 4:31-37

Jesus responds to His mother in such a way that our twenty-first century reading could easily misinterpret (verse 4). He was not being disrespectful. While addressing a female as "woman" could be said with indignation, it could also be said with great respect and affection, as we assume here. Notice He addresses Mary in this way again at the cross, when He entrusts her care to His disciple John (John 19:26).

Something to consider:

Jesus uses "woman" as an address in other places. Who is He addressing in these gospel passages?

Matthew 15:28

Luke 13:12

John 4:21

John 8:10

John 20:15

Verse 4 is Jesus' first mention of "His hour," but we can recognize He was ever conscious of His mission on earth. From His childhood until His final breath, He was under orders from the Heavenly Father, sent to redeem mankind. God's timing was impeccable. At just the right time, Jesus came. All history revolves around His completed sacrifice and resurrection. He again spoke of "His hour" in John 17:1 as He prayed for the disciples, recognizing what lay ahead for Him.

Mary told the wedding servants to do whatever Jesus told them to do. With the problem she faced, she certainly did two things right. First, she took it straight to Jesus. Let's make it a practice to do the same. Whatever problem, whatever need, whatever hardship you are facing today, go to Jesus with it. Hand it over. Tell Him what you need. Tell Him what others need. Place it in His almighty, all-knowing, all-powerful hands and let Him handle it.

Second, she encouraged others to obey Him. When we read it this way, it sounds so simple, but we have met the complications of full obedience many times. Just do what He says. This is acting in faith, not always understanding what He asks of us or why. Obedience rejects human wisdom, turns from popular opinion, and reaches out to risk trusting Him — stepping out of the boat onto choppy waves in the dark. "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus."

Something to consider:

Think of other miracles of Jesus and what He asked people to do in faith. What comes to mind?

Jesus had simple instructions for the servants. Take the six stone waterpots and fill them with water. Yes, stone waterpots are unusual and not easy to carry to the well! But archaeologists have located other examples and recognize their use for ceremonial bathing. And the servants were to fill them to the very top. This meant no one could add anything else to cause the water to become wine. Most likely, the water was transported from the well and poured into these waterpots;

people didn't carry them back and forth. Each one held between 20 and 30 gallons, so let's just call that 25 gallons each. That's a lot of trips to the well. "Do whatever He tells you."

You've planned parties. How many people would you have at the party if you needed 150 gallons of punch for refills? No doubt, it was the wedding of the century!

When we ask Jesus to meet our needs, He doesn't skimp. He doesn't do a half-way job. He doesn't just get by. He does exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). Our cups overflow (Psalm 23:5). He is a God of plenty. He satisfies the thirsty soul.

Something to consider:

Check out these verses to see the way God meets our needs:

Psalm 22:26
Psalm 36:8
Psalm 63:5
Psalm 103:5
Psalm 107:9
Psalm 145:16
Isaiah 44:3
Isaiah 55:1
John 7:37
Revelation 21:6

Jesus Saves the Best Until Last

The wine tasting began. The servants took some of the liquid from the jars and served it for the approval of the master of the feast or the head caterer. Then the bridegroom had a taste and said, in essence, "Wow!" The natural processes of planting, harvesting, crushing, fermenting, and aging were miraculously overturned. We don't have any clue about what it looked like or tasted like, but the conclusion was the wine was better than what had been served first.

Jesus makes everything better. We try. We work. We aim for the best. But His touch changes well-water into champagne. He can do what is impossible.

Maybe you're struggling with parenting. You've read the books and listened to the podcasts. You've hung chore lists, given stickers, and threatened consequences. You've battled strong wills and bad attitudes and glazed eyes. But when Jesus takes over, you begin to see real improvement.

Maybe your work situation is grueling. The boss is

unfair, the assignments are piling up, the coworkers are unengaged, and the paycheck is too skimpy. But when Jesus takes over, the lights come on, and you know the next step to take.

Maybe your church is dying. You've taught and invited and swept and sung and given — but you aren't seeing growth. Your pastor is discouraged, and your kids are complaining. Then Jesus turns it around by moving in and doing what only He can do.

We serve a God who specializes in amazing transformations. Don't ever think the situation is hopeless. Don't



give up. Give it to Him and let Him work a miracle.

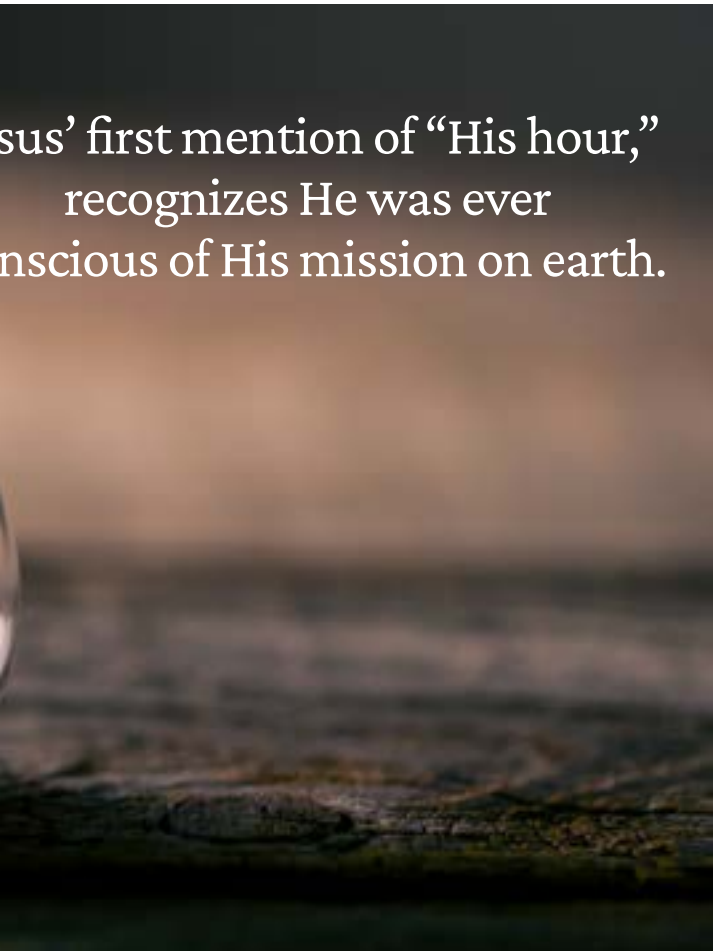
Something to consider:

Name that miracle! What are some other examples of occasions where God took something like a pot of water and made it much more?

Genesis 1	2 Kings 4:42-44
1 Kings 17:12-16	Matthew 14:15-21
2 Kings 4:1-7	Matthew 15:32-39

That's what Jesus does. He takes nothing and makes something. He takes little and makes it more than enough. He takes average and makes it extra special. Just give Him what you have. He can do the rest.

This miracle also reminds us that the best is yet to come. Even if your life is great right now, better days are ahead. Maybe you have money in the bank and no leaks in the roof, and you love your life...wonderful! But the best is yet to come! For most of us, though, it's an encouraging truth to latch onto. Heaven is going to be better. The heartaches and headaches will be no more. The issues with your health, your finances, your family situation, your work,



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your neighborhood, your friendships, your church — all will pass away, and God will give us the most beautiful, brilliant, magnificent, perfect future of all He has prepared for us. Forget average. Forget ordinary. The best is yet to come!

Jesus in the Spotlight

The wedding feast was salvaged, and the host's reputation was protected. The punch was delicious. But that's

not the point of John 2, is it? Verse 11 is the key. It's really all about Jesus. Here's a glimpse of who He is and why He came. Here's a peek at His glory and power. This was only the beginning. The spotlight turned to Jesus Christ — God in human flesh — and His earthly mission. The miracles provided confirmation, evidence that He is the Messiah. His glory as the Sovereign Creator who satisfies our needs was revealed in the kitchen of the wedding feast at Cana.

What was the response of the disciples who witnessed this miracle? Obviously, they were already disciples, following Jesus and listening to His teaching. But this miracle marked a turning point for them, too. "The disciples believed in Him" (verse 11b).

Don't you imagine them with wide eyes, mouths hanging open, pulses racing when they realized what happened? They looked at one another with raised eyebrows. They shook their heads, trying to clear the cobwebs. This was more than they expected, more than they could comprehend. Their only response was humble belief. They were in the presence of God.

Something to consider:

What does John 20:30 say about other signs Jesus did during His earthly ministry?

What about us? When we see the powerful hand of God at work, our faith grows stronger. We may not be standing at the stone pots, but we've watched as loved ones went to the altar, made it through surgery, or returned home. We've seen relationships restored, hearts mended, peace poured out. We've been witnesses to new births — physical and spiritual. We know the power of God to forgive sin and transform lives. We glimpse His glory, and we believe.

Only Jesus can satisfy our deepest needs. Only Jesus can pay the sin debt we owe. Only Jesus can provide peace and joy that overcomes the circumstances of this world. And our God has given His promise to supply all our needs by His riches in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). Hallelujah! 

About the Writer: Carol Reid lives in Old Hickory, Tennessee, works part-time on the curriculum team at D6 Family Ministry, and regularly serves in the Kids' Ministry and the Sew Much More lifegroup at The Donelson Fellowship. She enjoys her children and grandchildren, assorted crafts, bargain shopping, and puzzles of all kinds.