

Commentary Notes

David Guzik https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Jhn/Jhn-2.cfm

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Tony Merida [Exalting Jesus in John](#) (\$2.99 on Amazon)

A.W. Pink [The Gospel of John](#) (99¢ on Amazon)

The purpose of the Gospel of John:

The Gospel writer gives us a clear and distinct thesis in John 20:30-31:

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

We can summarize John's thesis in one word: **believe**.

In the course of twenty-one chapters, the Gospel writer will answer three questions:

1. Who do we need to believe?

- When John identifies Jesus as the Christ, he's not saying a person just needs to acknowledge that Jesus is the one called "Messiah" but that one must believe that Jesus is the one who will fulfill all of the promises God made to his people.
- We need to believe Jesus is the one who will fix all that's been broken, the one who will end tyranny and oppression, the one who will reign forever as King and Lord, and the one who gave his life so we who are guilty can be forgiven and reconciled back to God.
- We also need to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. John not only makes the claim that Jesus is the promised Messiah but also that Jesus is God. Only someone divine could do all that God promised in the Old Testament. Only someone divine could be trusted with the absolute power and authority promised to the Messiah. Only someone divine could be the perfect sacrifice and payment for the sin of the world. If Jesus were not divine, then he could not be the fulfillment of all the promises God made.

2. What does it mean to believe?

- The word believe translates the Greek word *pisteuo*, which means "to trust" or "to put one's faith into something or someone." **To believe in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God requires more than mere intellectual adherence to a set of facts about the life of Christ. It requires trusting one's whole self into who Christ said he was and what he was sent to accomplish.**

3. Why do we need to believe?

One of the dominant themes of John's Gospel is our need for life, and it's always connected to the person and work of Jesus Christ. (1:4, 3:16, 5:24, 11:25-26, 14:6) The life we need—spiritual, eternal life, delivered from the judgment of hell—comes through belief in Jesus Christ (20:31). He illustrated it for his disciples by comparing their relationship to a vine with branches. The branch doesn't get a one-time injection of life from the vine. It gets daily nourishment from its connection to the vine, and if something were to sever the branch from the vine, the branch would die. When we truly believe, we truly begin to live.

Miracle: Turning water into wine.

2:1 *And* (While modern translations do not begin with “And”, it is there in the Greek. *καί* is the first word in the Greek, which would be translated, “And”) It is to be carefully noted that this second chapter of John opens with the word “and,” which indicates that its contents are closely connected with what has gone before. One of the things that is made prominent in John 1 (following the Introduction, which runs to the end of verse 18) is the failure of Judaism, and the turning away from it to Christ. Judaism still existed as a religious system, but it ministered no comfort to the heart. It had degenerated into a cold, mechanical routine, utterly destitute of joy in God. Israel had lost the joy of their espousals.

2:1 *On the third day:* The Holy Spirit presents to our view a third day scene. The third day is the day of resurrection. It was on the third day that the earth emerged from its watery grave, as it was on the third day the barren earth was clothed with vegetable life (Gen. 1:9, 11).

2:2 *Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.* Jesus’s mother, Mary, seems to be involved in the wedding, so it may be that of a family member or family friend. They arrive and something terrible happens: the hosts run out of wine. Running out of wine is a big deal. It’s the groom’s responsibility to provide fitting hospitality to all of the guests. To run out of wine is insulting to everyone who’s there. No one can run to the grocery store and pick up some more beverages. They’re stuck—out of luck.

2:3a *When the wine ran out:*

- This was a major social faux pas. “To fail in providing adequately for the guests would involve social disgrace. In the closely knit communities of Jesus’ day such an error would never be forgotten, and would haunt the newly married couple all their lives.” (Tenney)
- Wine was a rabbinical symbol of joy. Therefore “to run out of wine would almost have been the equivalent of admitting that neither the guests nor the bride and groom were happy.” (Boice)

2:3b *the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”*

- *Why did Mary ask Jesus to do something? Mary was no doubt earnestly anticipating Jesus’ day of demonstration, for it would be a day of vindication for her. Yet she would not force the issue, leaving the matter with Jesus.*
- Keep in mind that Mary knew that the angel had spoken to her about Jesus’ birth, announcing that He would be the Son of the Most High and would reign on the throne of David forever (Luke 1:32-33). She knew that she had conceived Him while she was still a virgin. She remembered the prophecies of Simeon and Anna over the baby Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:28-38). She treasured in her heart the incident with Jesus in the temple when he was twelve (Luke 2:41-51). And so it seems likely that here she is suggesting to Jesus that He do something to demonstrate that He was the Messiah (Morris, pp. 179-180, following Godet).

2:4a *Jesus said to her, “Woman...”* This title was not mean, rude, or disrespectful. In fact, it’s the same way Jesus addresses Mary when he’s dying on the cross (19:26; 20:13, 15). But it does demonstrate less attachment than another title might. Jesus could say, “Mother,” but he doesn’t. Mary has to learn to approach Jesus like everyone else—as a sinner in need of a Savior... No matter who you are, there’s only one way to come to Jesus: as a sinner in need of help.

- It was not that the Savior resented Mary’s inviting His aid, but a plain intimation that she must allow Him to act in His own way. Christ here showed that His season of subjection to Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:51) was over, His public ministry had now commenced and she must not presume to dictate to Him.
- He was here calling attention to the fact that He was more than man, that He was none less than the Son of God.
- Christ would here teach us that Mary was only a woman—“Blessed among women” (Luke 1:28) but not “blessed above women.”

2:4b What does this have to do with me?

- He did not come to obey mankind—even his mother—but God.
- It may be translated, “What do you and I have in common (so far as the matter at hand is concerned)?” It was a rebuke of Mary’s suggestion that He do something to demonstrate that He was the Messiah. Also, Jesus was indicating to Mary that there was now a new relationship between them as He entered His public ministry. He was now out from under her authority and was totally under the authority of His heavenly Father. Thus she must not presume upon Him or dictate to Him how He must act. She must allow Him to minister in His own timing and way.
- She could no longer view him as other mothers viewed their sons; she must no longer be allowed the prerogatives of motherhood. It is a remarkable fact that everywhere Mary appears during the course of Jesus’ ministry, Jesus is at pains to establish distance between them (e.g., Mt. 12:46-50). This is not callousness on Jesus’ part: on the cross he makes provision for her future (19:25-27). But she, like every other person, must come to him as the promised Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (D. A. Carson p. 171)

2:4c *My hour has not yet come.* The *hour* is the time of his suffering and death. (7:30, 12:23) The *hour* is the pinnacle of human history, when the perfect Son of God became sin for us so that we might be made righteous. The hour is the reason Jesus came to earth. He came to offer his life on the cross for our sin. He was born for the hour. He was born to die.

- "My hour is not yet come" became the most solemn watchword of His life, marking the stages by which He drew nigh to His death. Seven references are made in this Gospel to that awful "hour."
- This "hour" was the hour of His humiliation. It was the "hour" of His suffering. But why should Christ refer to this "hour" when Mary was seeking to dictate to Him? Ah, surely the answer is not far to seek. That awful "hour" to which he looked forward, was the time when He would be subject to man’s will, for then He would be delivered up into the hands of sinners. But until then, He was not to be ordered by man; instead, He was about His Father’s business, seeking only to do His will.
- **He denies Mary’s request, but then fulfills it on His own terms, more discreetly and behind the scenes.** The Lord Jesus recognized in this request of Mary’s a call from His Father. He discerned in this simple act of furnishing the wedding-guests with wine a very different thing from what His mother saw. The performing of this miracle marked an important crisis in the Savior’s career. His act of turning the water into wine would alter the whole course of His life. Hitherto He had lived in quiet seclusion in Nazareth, but from this time on He would become a public and marked character. From henceforth He would scarcely have leisure to eat, and His opportunity for retired communion with the Father would be only when others slept. If He performed this miracle, and manifested forth His glory, He would become the gazing stock of every eye, and the common talk of every tongue. He would be followed about from place to place, thronged and jostled by vulgar crowds. This would provoke the jealousy of religious leaders, and He would be spied upon and regarded as a public menace. Later, this would eventuate in His being seized as a notorious criminal, falsely accused, and sentenced to be crucified. All of this stood out before Him as He was requested to supply the needed wine. But He did not shrink. He had come to do the will of God, no matter what the cost... As He stood there by Mary’s side and listened to her words, that the Cross challenged Him.

2:5 *His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”*

- This is very beautiful. Mary meekly accepted the Lord’s rebuke, recognized His rights to act as He pleased, and left the matter entirely in His hands. There is an important and much neglected lesson here for each of us. How prone we are to dictate to God! How often we are disposed to tell Him what to do!
- Despite his mild rebuke, Mary is confident Jesus could and would do something. She demonstrated faith—a willingness to leave it in his hands, confident that whatever he said and did was best.
- The recorded words of Mary are few. However, it is good to pay attention to her words that are recorded, because they consistently glorify Jesus, not Mary herself. If only we would obey Mary’s direction, whatever He says to you, do it.
- To deliberately go through Mary to get to Jesus is to regard Jesus as hardhearted, and Mary as tenderhearted. This concept “is totally alien from the Bible. It comes from mother-son ideas prevalent in pagan religions.” (Barnhouse)

2:6 Now there were six stone water jars:

- Six is the number of man, for it was on the sixth day man was made. There were six waterpots standing there, not seven, the perfect number.
- All that was left of Judaism was of the flesh; God was not in it. As we read later on in this Gospel, the "feasts of the Lord" (Lev. 23:2) were now only "the feast of the Jews" (2:13).
- These six waterpots were of "stone," not silver which speaks of redemption, nor of gold which tells of Divine glory.
- they were empty. Again, we say, what a vivid portrayal have we here of Israel's condition at that time!
- The six stone waterpots would have held between 120-180 gallons. The Jewish purification rituals were extensive. The last book of the Mishnah contained 126 chapters with 1,001 separate items of purification. There are two special tractates with instructions about purifying hands and vessels, the latter containing over 30 chapters! Judaism had become a religion that emphasized external cleansing and rituals, but often their hearts were far from God (Mark 7:6-8).

2:7 Jesus said to the servants...

- Christ was the One to work the miracle, yet the "servants" were the ones who seemed to do everything. They filled the waterpots, they drew off the wine, they bore it to the governor of the feast. There was no visible exhibition of putting forth of Divine power. Christ pronounced no magical formula: He did not even command the water to become wine.
- What was witnessed by the spectators was men at work, not God creating out of nothing. And all this speaks loudly to us. It was a parable in action. The means used were human, the result was seen to be Divine.
- This was Christ's first miracle, and in it He shows us that God is pleased to use human instrumentality in performing the wonders of His grace. The miracle consisted in the supplying of wine and, as previously pointed out, wine symbolizes joy in God.
- Learn then, that the Lord is pleased to employ human agents in bringing joy to 'the hearts of men.

2:7 "Fill the jars with water"

- What was the element Christ used on this occasion in producing the wine? It was water. Now "water" is one of the symbols of the written Word (see Ephesians 5:26). And how may we His servants, today, bring the wine of joy unto human hearts? By ministering the Word (see Ephesians 5:26). Here then is blessed instruction for the servants of God today. Let us go forth with the Water of life, implicitly obeying the commands of our Lord, and He will use us to bring the wine of Divine joy to many a sad heart.

2:7b And they [the servants] filled them up to the brim.

- The servants under the direction of Jesus were in a unique place of blessing for this miracle. Jesus wanted the cooperation of men in this miracle. He could have filled the pots Himself, or just as easily created the liquid in the pots. But He knew that if the servants shared in the work, then they also shared in the blessing.
- The servants did not do the miracle. Their efforts alone were completely insufficient. But because of their obedience to Jesus, they shared in the joy of the miracle.
- The servants were especially blessed because they obeyed without question, and to the fullest (they filled them up to the brim). This means that the miracle would be fulfilled in the greatest measure possible. If they were lazy and only filled the waterpots half full, there would have only been half as much wine.

2:8 And Jesus said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. This took faith on behalf of the servants. Imagine how angry the master of the feast would be if they brought him water to taste! Yet in faith, they obeyed the word of Jesus.

2:9 (Though the servants who had drawn the water knew)

- It was the servants—not the "disciples," nor yet Mary—who were nearest to the Lord on this occasion, and who possessed the knowledge of His mind. What puzzled the "ruler of the feast" was no secret to these "servants." How different are God's ways from ours! The Lord of glory was here as "Servant." In marvelous grace He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister:" therefore, are those who are humble in service, and those engaged in the humblest service, nearest to Him.
- John doesn't even tell us how the miracle was done. It was very low key. Jesus didn't call all the guests around and like a magician have someone confirm that it was only water in the pots. Then, "Abracadabra," He had them taste it again. Everyone marveled, "Wow! How'd He do that?" In fact, so far as John reports, Jesus didn't even touch the waterpots or pray. The focus in the account is not on the spectacular part of the miracle, but on Christ and His glory. Those who had eyes to see knew what He did and believed in Him.

2:10 "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." **This illustrates the ways of men and the ways of God. The world (and Satan also) gives its best first, and keeps the worst for the last. First the pleasures of sin—for a season—and then the wages of sin. But with God it is the very opposite. He brings His people into the wilderness before He brings them into the promised inheritance. First the Cross then the crown. Fellow believer, for us, the best wine is yet to be: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).**

2:11a *This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee*

- This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee: This beginning of signs in the Gospel of John is a miracle of conversion, from the old ways of law, ceremony and purification to the new life of Jesus.
- How did Jesus actually do miracles? He did them in many different ways. Here, Jesus did not say a word or blink an eye. He merely exercised His will and the miracle was done.
- Moses turned water into blood, showing that the Law results in death (Exodus 7:17-21). But Jesus' first miracle turned water into wine, showing the gladness and joy of His new work. This acts out what John said in John 1:17: For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
- We could say that the water is like a relationship with God under the Old Covenant, and the wine is like a relationship with God under the New Covenant.
 - The wine was *after* the water, and the New Covenant is *after* the Old Covenant.
 - The wine was *from* the water, and the New Covenant is *from* the Old Covenant
 - The wine was and *better* than the water; and the New Covenant is *better* than the Old Covenant.

2:11b *and manifested his glory.* According to John 2:1, this miracle happened on the third day. John is hinting at the idea that Jesus shows forth His glory on the third day, and that His disciples believe in Him when they see His glory.

2:11c *And his disciples believed in him.* Of course they believed before, but now their belief was deepened and re-expressed. This is typical in our Christian lives. God does something great in our lives, and we believe in Him all over again. They had already believed, but for John faith isn't a "one-time and you're done" sort of thing. You believe in Christ at the moment of salvation, but you go on believing more and more as you see more of who He is.

Teachings of this Miracle

To determine the intended meaning, we need to consider the context as well as some clues in the account itself. In John 1:16-17, we read, “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.” The contrast with Moses and the Law puts the focus on the new covenant blessings that Jesus provides. “Fullness” emphasizes the abundant blessings that Jesus bestows. Here He gives an abundance of wine, a symbol of the Messianic kingdom.

In the context following this miracle, we read of Jesus cleansing the Jewish temple and proclaiming His risen body as the new temple (2:13-22). In chapter 3, we see Jesus teaching a leader of the Jews about the new birth that He came to bring. Nicodemus had the rituals and the commandments down pat. What he lacked was new life. In chapter 4, instead of the water of Jacob’s well, Jesus offers a sinful woman living water that will quench her thirst forever. Instead of the worship at Gerazim or Jerusalem, Jesus talks about worship in spirit and in truth (see D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* [Eerdmans/Apollos], p. 166). And here, in the story itself, we see the empty waterpots that were used for the Jewish custom of purification filled with the new wine that Jesus gives. And, we have John’s statement (2:11) that this sign manifested Jesus’ glory with the result that His disciples believed in Him.

Also, to interpret the miracle properly, we need to understand that in their culture, the Jews viewed wine and weddings as times of joy and celebration, and even as symbolic of the future Messianic kingdom. The rabbis could say, “There is no rejoicing save with wine” (cited by Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* [Eerdmans], p. 179, note 15). Morris adds that this does not indicate drunkenness, which was strongly condemned. Also, the wine was usually diluted with one part of wine to three parts of water. It was not as strong as our wine or beer are.

But wine was associated with joy and gladness (Ps. 104:15; Judges 9:13). Isaiah 25:6 promises, “The Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; a banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine.” Joel 2:19, 24, promises, “The Lord will answer and say to His people, ‘Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied in full with them; and I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.... The threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.’” (See, also, Jer. 31:12; Joel 2:19, 24; Amos 9:13-14.)

So we can sum up the significance of this miracle: **Jesus’ first miraculous sign should cause us to see His glory and the superiority of the joyous salvation that He brings so that we believe in Him.**

A. The first miracle foreshadows his shed blood.

this first miracle which our Savior performed, the "wine," which is the symbol of His shed blood, should be so prominent! The marriage-feast was the occasion of joy and merriment; and does not God give us here something more than a hint that in order for His people to be joyous, the precious blood of His Son must be first poured forth! Ah, that is the foundation of every blessing we enjoy, the ground of all our happiness. Hence did Christ begin His supernatural works of mercy by producing that which spoke of His sacrificial death.

B. The point of this story is to reveal the power of Jesus. We see that power revealed in two ways.

Wine is a symbol of joy, especially of joy in the coming Messianic kingdom. The six stone waterpots that were for the Jewish custom of purification point to the old rituals of Judaism that could not completely satisfy. Jesus fulfilled those ceremonial rituals with the abundant joy of salvation and new life in Him. He is the Son of God who brings the transforming joy of salvation to all that believe. Leon Morris states (p. 176): “This particular miracle signifies that there is a transforming power associated with Jesus. He changes the water of Judaism into the wine of Christianity, the water of Christlessness into the wine of the richness and the fullness of eternal life in Christ, the water of the law into the wine of the gospel.”

- [Jesus Has the Power to Transform Water into Wine](#)
- [Jesus Has the Power to Transform People’s Lives](#)

The power of Jesus to transform water into wine is amazing, but the power to transform a rebellious sinner into a saint is even more remarkable.

In this passage we begin to see this transformation take place in the lives of his disciples as they're trusting in him and their faith in him grows. They hear the testimony of John the Baptist (1:19-34) and begin to believe. The works and words of Jesus convince them even further (2:1-12), and as they trust in him, they are transformed from lowly fisherman to bold witnesses of his unmatched power.

John the Baptist has already referred to himself as clearing the way for Jesus as the Lord (John 1:23). So here the apostle John is saying, "The glory of Jesus that we saw in this first miracle is none other than the glory of the Lord." Jesus is God.

This miracle also reveals Jesus as the Creator: "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (John 1:3). Just as He transformed the water into wine He also can change sinners into saints. He transforms the deadness of religious ritualism into the new wine of a relationship with Him. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17). Jesus has the power to change your heart!

C. A message to the unbeliever

The natural man has a "wine" of his own. There is a carnal happiness enjoyed which is produced by "the pleasures of sin"—the merriment which this world affords. But how fleeting this is! How unsatisfying! Sooner or later this "wine," which is pressed from "the vine of the earth" (Rev. 14:18), gives out. The poor sinner may be surrounded by gay companions, he may be comfortably circumstanced financially and socially, yet the time comes when he discovers he has "no wine." Happy the one who is conscious of this. The discovery of our own wretchedness is often the turning point. It prepares us to look to that One who is ready "to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. 61:3). Unbelieving friend, there is only One who can furnish the true "wine," the "good" wine, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He can satisfy the longing of the soul. He can quench the thirst of the heart. He can put a song into thy mouth which not even the angels can sing, even the song of Redemption. What then must you do? What price must you pay? Ah, dear friend, listen to the glad tidings of grace: "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15).

D. Abundant Provision of Christ

This miracle also emphasizes the abundant provision of Christ for our needs. The wine had run out. There was no way to get more to supply the need of the guests and to save the groom from social disaster. But it's when we come to the end of ourselves that the Lord displays His power. It was when there was no way to feed the hungry multitude that the Lord provided enough bread to satisfy everyone's need, with 12 baskets full left over. It was in Paul's weakness that he came to know the sufficiency of the Lord's power (2 Cor. 12:9). If we think that we're rich and have need of nothing, we will not experience the Lord's sufficiency. It's only when we recognize that we are "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (Rev. 3:17) that we will hear Jesus knocking, open the door, and enjoy dinner with Him (Rev. 3:20). And He brings all the food!

Note: The inclusion of commentary notes from individuals does not mean that we endorse everything from that individual. We just happen to think the included can be helpful in understanding the context of what is going on.