

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL STORIES AND SIGNS

JESUS THE MIRACLE WORKER

Jesus Turns Water to Wine

Our ‘chronological’ study is not completely chronological. As we moved through the gospels we first studied the stories or parables of Jesus. Now, we return to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry to study the signs that were displayed by the Son of God. We most often call those signs miracles. Jesus’ miracles affirmed that He is who He said He was – the Son of God.

John Piper comments, “When God gives us eyes to see the glory of Jesus—His beauty and greatness and worth—that seeing is the laser beam, as it were, along which great grace streams into our lives. Grace to love. Grace to rejoice. Grace to live forevermore.” Signs represent something more important than the sign itself and are often linked to wonders in the Old Testament. In the New Testament the word "signs" is linked with both "wonders" and "miracles. Peter said in *Acts 2:22 (KJV)* ²² *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by **miracles** and **wonders** and **signs**, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.* Signs and miracles are historical events that appear to violate natural laws but reveal God to those who look to Him through eyes of faith.

We begin our study with the first miracle performed by our Lord. McGee comments, “Moses' first miracle was turning water into blood. Christ's first miracle was turning water into wine. The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ!”

Jesus’ miracles were a response to human need.

Read John 2:1-5 (ESV) ¹ *On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.* ² *Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.* ³ *When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”* ⁴ *And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”* ⁵ *His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”*

Most scholars agree that John’s reference to the third day is a connection with **John 1:43** where Jesus called Philip and Nathanael to be His disciples. From the beginning of His ministry, we learn that Jesus went to social events entering into day-to-day life experiences. In His attendance at the wedding, He placed His stamp on the marriage covenant.

The first picture that stood out to me as I read our lesson this week is that Jesus provides for even the ordinary things of our lives. Mary went to Jesus with her request – not a huge need on the big scheme of

life but something important at the moment – the wedding guests were about to run out of wine. Jewish wedding feasts lasted for seven days. There is no indication that this was the wedding of ‘rich folks.’ But, to run out of wine would be an embarrassment even for ‘poor folks’. Mary could have gone to the bridegroom but she choose to ‘tell it to Jesus!’

Was Mary asking Jesus to do a miracle or was she simply hoping that her son would help solve this problem and find some wine or maybe even cause the group to forget the lack of wine with His stories? We do not know. Some Bible scholars speculate that Mary was possibly in charge of the refreshments for the festivities because of her concern over the lack of wine. However, it was possible that it was just a part of Mary’s natural nature to be attentive to the needs of others. People with ‘servant hearts’ are like that.

Jesus' reply seems a bit abrupt, and maybe even harsh to us. I must tell you that His reply was not meant that way. ‘Woman’ was a polite way to address her. He addressed her the same way when He was on the cross. **John 19:26 (ESV)** ²⁶ *When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!”*

Commentators explain Jesus’ response to His mother in different ways. Some say His response is an indication that Jesus’ family ties are being broken. Matthew Henry goes as far as to say, “Though, as man, He was David's Son and hers; yet, as God, He was David's Lord and hers, and He would have her know it.” Others say Jesus was telling His mother that now was not the time to reveal His identity. Most likely, Joseph was dead by this time and Mary relied heavily on her eldest son. However, even His family ties must be given up to fulfill His divine purpose. Now, was the beginning of His ministry of being about His Father’s business as He had first mentioned at the age of 12. Anglican minister Chris Appleby says, “There's to be no inside track to Jesus. There's to be no approaching Him as you would an ordinary human being. From now on everyone must come to Him on the same basis; that is, faith in His redeeming work.” The mother of Jesus was destined to come to Him like the rest of us – through faith.

Jesus’ comment of “*My hour has not yet come*” would be a similar theme of Jesus’ ministry. Finally at the end of His public ministry in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of Jesus’ arrest, we read in **John 17:1 (ESV)** ¹ *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.”*

However, this request by Mary was a part of God’s perfect plan. It was part of the bridegroom’s responsibility to provide the wine. This was not the physical wedding of Jesus as some would like to skew the gospel and have us believe. But, Mary’s request for Jesus to supply the needed wine points to a significant picture of who Jesus is to us! There are pictures of Jesus being the Bridegroom and His bride being the church throughout the New Testament. Jesus referred to Himself as the Bridegroom in **Matthew 9:15 (ESV)** ¹⁵ *And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the*

bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Mary does not argue with Jesus. She simply says to the servants, *Do whatever he tells you.* In Mary's response to the servants we find a good model for prayer. Even though Mary did not understand what Jesus would do, she trusted Him. Trust and never doubt! Our prayers should not be demanding God to do our will but a plea for His will to be done. Better to ask God for help and leave it to Him to work out how to answer. Better to trust Him to know what's best for us.

It is best to believe in miracles over magic. Remember how some of the sorcerers and magicians in Egypt could duplicate some of Moses' miracles? However, they eventually came to a point where they were helpless and could do nothing. That is why it is best to trust in God alone.

Jesus' miracles communicated the nature of His identity.

Read John 2:6-10 (ESV) ⁶ *Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.* ⁷ *Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim.* ⁸ *And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.* ⁹ *When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom* ¹⁰ *and said to him, "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."*

Jesus responds to this act of faith by Mary by telling the servants to go and fill six stone jars with water. The stone water jars are those that were used for the Jewish rites of purification. They were empty but they had been set apart for purification. The empty but available stone jars remind me that we are God's 'jars of clay'. **2 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.* It is not the jar of clay but the treasure in the jar that gives its value.

This miracle of changing water into wine is an act that will signify the passing away of the old order of law and tradition and the coming of a new and living way for providing purification from sin. After the sacrificial death of Jesus, purification would come from the saving power of Jesus blood.

We are not told that all of the available water in the jars turned into wine. We are told that which the servants drew out and served was transformed into wine.

Verse 9 mentions that the Master of the Feast questioned the bridegroom about the best wine being served at the banquet. I am not sure who he was. Mattoon says that he kept the feast organized and

commanded the servants. I find it that Mary was the one who realized the wine had run out – not the master of the feast.

He acknowledges that what he is tasting is wine, not water. It was better than what was first served at the wedding feast. This was an unusual occurrence. The governor or master of the feast was ignorant of the source of the wine. Mattoon comments, “I’d rather be a servant and know the source of blessing, than a governor and not know the source. The Christian has more insight about what will happen over the next thirty years than an unsaved congressman or United Nations member. We know that Christ is coming again and look forward to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy.”

The world offers what appears to be best first to cajole us into sin, but later, the bitterness of sin is revealed. On the other hand, what Jesus offers us tastes sweeter as the years go by. The obedient Christian finds one blessing after another even in suffering. For the Christian, the best is yet to be.

This was not a ‘public’ miracle – only the disciples, Mary, and the servants seemed to have realized what happened. The angels on the night of Jesus birth declared God’s glory to the shepherds – those who were lowest in esteem in society. Now, as Jesus’ public ministry begins, Jesus reveals His first miracle to the servants at the wedding – not the guests or the hosts. And once again His mother knew – just as she had known on the night that Jesus was born – that His was a special birth.

Jesus’ miracles displayed glory and strengthened faith.

Read John 2:11-12 (ESV) ¹¹ *This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.* ¹² *After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.*

John tells us that the turning of water into wine was Jesus’ first miracle. This automatically tells us that any miracles some claim to be performed by Jesus when He was a young child are false.

God’s glory is related to His holiness. Our lesson writer, Leslie Hudson explains, “God’s holiness is unique and cannot be mistaken for another glory, When Moses saw His glory in the burning bush, the old shepherd knew it was not simply a plant on fire. When the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai as a cloud, no one mistook it for your everyday cumulus clouds. When Belshazzar saw the handwritten on the wall, he knew he wasn’t seeing things. When God announced the birth of Jesus, it was to lowly shepherds and the announcement was adorned with the glory of His angelic host. And when Jesus turned the water into wine it was as holy and set apart as any other of God’s miraculous displays.”

Philippians 4:19 (ESV) ¹⁹ *And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*