

## EXPOSITION OF JOHN

### Message #11

### John 2:1-11

One of the most distinguished residents to ever live in the state of Idaho - in Ketchum, was a man from Petoskey, Michigan whose name was Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway was a novelist, a journalist, a poet, a writer of short stories and a winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954. Hemingway had fame, fortune, and famous friendships which included other authors, bullfighters, politicians, and actors and actresses. But the one thing Hemingway did not have was fulfillment in life. Because in 1960, Ernest Hemingway, at the age of 62, put a shotgun to his head in his Ketchum home and killed himself. Let me read Carlos Baker's description of what happened in his biography of Hemingway (*Ernest Hemingway, A Life Story*, pp. 563-64).

“Sunday morning dawned bright and cloudless. Ernest awoke early as always. He put on the red “Emperor’s robe” and padded softly down the carpeted stairway. The early sunlight lay in pools on the living room floor. He had noticed that the guns were locked up in the basement. But the keys, as he well knew, were on the window ledge above the kitchen sink. He tiptoed down the basement stairs and unlocked the storage room. It smelled as dank as a grave. He chose a double-barreled shotgun with a tight choke. He had used it for years of pigeon shooting. He took some shells from one of the boxes in the storage room, closed and locked the door and climbed the basement stairs. If he saw the bright of day outside, it did not deter him. He crossed the living room to the front foyer, a shrine-like entryway five feet by seven, with oak-paneled walls and a floor of linoleum tile...He slipped in two shells, lowered the gun butt carefully to the floor, leaned forward, pressed the twin barrels against his forehead just above the eyebrows and tripped both triggers.”

I don't care who you are, or how much you have, sooner or later the exhilarations and excitements of life will wear out and that is exactly why you and I need Jesus Christ in our lives. Anything touched by Jesus Christ will become the absolute best. The best of life and the fullness of life will be experienced when one is touched by Jesus Christ and that certainly is a key lesson, this first miracle communicates to us. The primary point is this:

**THE FIRST MIRACLE PERFORMED BY JESUS CHRIST WAS THE TURNING OF WATER INTO WINE AND THE PURPOSE OF THIS MIRACLE WAS TO PROVE THAT HE WAS TRULY GOD AND TO SHOW THAT THE BEST OF ANYTHING COMES FROM BEING TOUCHED BY HIM.**

You will experience life at its best if you are touched by Him. You will experience life at its fullest if you are touched by Him. Full joy, full meaning, full purpose, full excitement, full life comes by being touched by Jesus Christ. What Jesus Christ did to water, in transforming it into the best wine, is exactly what He does for humans in transforming them into the best of what they can become. Now this first miracle of turning water to wine is carefully developed for us and we want to carefully see it. There are various observable facts to see concerning this miracle:

**FACT #1** – The time of the miracle is specifically stated. 2:1a

This miracle occurred on the "third day." This refers to the "third day" after the calling of Nathanael, after purposing to go to into Galilee (John 1:43). Nathanael is a native of Cana (John 21:2). This is actually the seventh day of Christ's public ministry.

One might wonder why Matthew doesn't record this particular miracle? The simple answer to this is that Matthew is not yet a disciple of Jesus Christ. So far we have John, Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathanael. Matthew wasn't present yet, but John was, so he records it and tells the very day that it happened. John is precise in dating and placing events - Cana (2:1); Capernaum (2:12); Jerusalem (2:13). This historical documentation is very accurate. Things that God does occur on specific days at specific times and the same is true for the day He changed you from being a sinner to a saint.

**FACT #2** – The circumstance of the miracle is specifically stated. 2:1b, 2

In Palestine, a wedding was a big social event and typically all the people from the village came to it. There was going to be a wedding between a man and a woman and Jesus and His disciples had been invited to attend it. Word had obviously spread that Jesus was in Galilee and either through His fishermen disciples or His mom, Jesus was invited. Actually this is a very smart move for any couple who purposes to invite Jesus Christ to be part of their married lives will, generally speaking, have a happy life. **Jesus did not come to abolish life, but to sanctify it and make it more abundant.** Sometimes a wedding would last up to a week (Genesis 29:27-28).

By virtue of the fact that Jesus was invited and did attend, we learn that He was no social recluse. John the Baptist was a social recluse, who hung out in the wilderness areas, but not Jesus. Jesus Christ was not some killjoy who would be a depressing Person to have at a wedding. It is true He was a man of sorrows, but He was not ONLY a man of sorrows. We do know that He was a good dinner guest. Even children liked Him. He was not some gloomy, depressing, downer of a Person to be around. His Presence was wanted and needed by people who were having a good time, not just by those having a tough time in life.

If we are going to be like Jesus Christ, we should be upbeat and have good social graces. We must attend some social functions that will put us in contact with people. Christ-like people will go to company parties, weddings, banquets, reunions and at these events they will demonstrate the love of Christ and joy in the Lord. You'll reach more people this way, than acting like some stick-in-the-mud person. There were times Christ needed to be alone, but He was also a joy to have in a social setting.

It is interesting that Christ begins His ministry on earth at a wedding and He will conclude it for the church at another wedding - the marriage supper of the Lamb, in which the Church will be presented to Christ as His pure bride.

**FACT #3** – The city of the miracle is specifically stated. 2:1c

This first miracle occurred in Cana of Galilee. Most believe this city is called today Kefar Kenna. In fact, there are some rival churches there that claim they know where this event actually happened (Gary Burge, *John*, p. 90). Now Cana of Galilee was the hometown of Nathanael (John 21:2). It is a small city located about ten miles west of the Sea of Galilee and it was very close to Nazareth (3-4 miles), which was Christ's hometown. In fact, the Church Father, Jerome, who spent time in the Middle East, said that you could actually see Cana from Nazareth.

Cana is the place where two main miracles of Christ occur: 1) Turn water into wine; 2) Heal the Nobleman's son (John 4:46-54). Cana was a city that had an ample supply of water and also shade from the many fig trees which grew in the area. But Cana is not a big time Jerusalem. It is not sophisticated Rome or philosophical Athens. It is not some ecclesiastical center for a religious temple or cathedral. It doesn't have the historical glamour of a Bethany or Hebron. But it was in this small town of Cana where Jesus Christ chose to do some powerful things. Here is where Jesus would perform His first sign miracle.

You don't have to be big and impressive to be touched by Jesus Christ. You don't have to come from some fancy, big school to be greatly used by God. You can be a small town boy or girl who lives in some obscure place like Cana - but you let Jesus Christ touch your life and you will be filled with a power and you will see God do things you never dreamed.

**FACT #4** – The mother of Jesus is specifically identified. 2:1d, 5, 12

Jesus' mother was there and she apparently was involved in some way in the wedding, because she was somehow connected to the arrangements and the servants (2:5). John never mentions Mary by name here. He simply identifies her as Jesus' mother (2:1, 5, 12; 6:42; 19:25-27). This is a book about the Deity of Jesus Christ. In fact, there is no mention of the bride at this wedding and weddings are typically focused on the Bride. You have old waterpots mentioned in this story, but no bride mentioned.

The Gospel of John is a book that is designed to give increase to Jesus and decrease to humans. Those who think they have to pray to Mary or go through Mary to get to Jesus, need a good dose of the Gospel of John. **Mary specifically pointed people to Jesus, not herself.** Now Mary had probably noticed a major change in Jesus since He had come back from Judea, having been baptized by John and identified from heaven as being God. He now also was beginning to put together a small band of disciples. Things were different this time when He came to Galilee.

We may notice that there is no mention of Joseph at this wedding. Most scholars assume that Joseph was already dead when this happened. Mary probably loved weddings. She never had a nice wedding. Her pregnancy had been somewhat scandalous and certainly mysterious and she lived life with that cloud hanging over her head so Mary was there at this wedding. There were people who probably questioned the validity of the virgin birth, so this would be a good chance for Jesus to perform a miracle and clear her name, at a wedding. You may have a bizarre past or pregnancy. Follow Jesus Christ and watch what He will do for you. Ultimately He will transform you into His glory.

**FACT #5** – The circumstance of the miracle is specifically stated. 2:3

The thing that sets the stage for this miracle is an impending social catastrophe, especially at a Jewish wedding. The typical wedding feast ran for about a week (Gen. 29:27-28; Judges 14:12). Somehow, there had been a miscalculation and they ran out of wine. More than likely the families involved in this wedding were not rich. Jewish people in this area did not typically have an abundance of wealth and probably these families put on the best wedding they possibly could afford. Since Mary had never had a nice wedding, she was probably somewhat fanatical about this girl not being humiliated in front of all of these people, so she went to Jesus and said they are out of wine. Now I want you to think for a moment about what is happening here. The wedding is out of wine and this could have been a great opportunity for Jesus to give a theological lecture against having fun at a party and against drinking wine. But what we shall see is the best way to help and minister in this situation was not to lecture, but to help and miraculously provide more wine.

Now this wine was real wine. In fact, Jewish Rabbis say of weddings, "Without wine, there is no joy" (William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, Vol. 1, p. 97). They get that idea from a Psalm like Psalm 104:15 which says "wine makes the heart glad." Most wine was a combination of fermented wine and water. Most good wine had just the right amount of water and had been aged to the point that it had a pinkish glow to it. Wine that was bitter, without water was more reddish (Proverbs 23:31). But there is no sense quibbling about this - it was real wine and if you drank too much of it, you could get drunk. Some legalists have real trouble with this being real wine, but it was. **Jesus turns this real water into real wine at a real party** and, He, Himself drank real wine which is why some Pharisees called Him a "wine-bibber" or a "drunk" (Matthew 11:19).

Now for the Pharisaical types in the audience, I remind you of four facts:

- 1) Wine was the common beverage of the Middle East. J. Vernon McGee said that wine was the "staple article of diet."
- 2) Water in the Middle East was impure and could cause serious intestinal problems. This is why Paul challenged Timothy to drink wine for his stomach's sake.
- 3) Wine is not forbidden in Scripture, drunkenness is forbidden in Scripture. Jesus is at a wedding and part of married life is physical intimacy which is legitimate before God. Immorality is the evil sin, not sexual activity. Drunkenness is the evil sin, not drinking wine. In just about anything God makes there is a good, legitimate use and an evil, sinful use - Wine, Sex, Drugs. Inventions like TV, computers.
- 4) Jesus is God and can drink what He wants and do what He wants because He will never sin in anything. Who are sinful humans to question Jesus, the Holy God?

The circumstance is this - Jesus' mother goes to Jesus and informs Him that the wedding family has run out of wine.

**FACT #6** – The response of Jesus to His mother is specifically stated. 2:4

Now the purpose of the Gospel of John is to show that Jesus Christ is God and to reveal Himself as such and that is precisely the point of this response to His mother. If you and I talked to our mothers in this way, it would perhaps appear to be somewhat demeaning. However, when Jesus Christ does this it is not demeaning it is elevating, for it clearly establishes His Holy identity.

There are three responses I want you to see:

**(Response #1)** - Christ calls His mother Woman. 2:4a

**This is a critical moment in the life of Jesus Christ, for by using this term, He is informing all that He is no longer under Mary's parental authority, but His Heavenly Father's authority.** Jesus was now moving forward in the plan of God. The truth is, this is not a demeaning term at all. This is equivalent to the French who call a woman Madam. God created man and woman and there is nothing wrong with being identified as such. Woman is a term Christ used for His own mother; it is a Divine title of respect. It was a polite term - you are a lady (Matthew 15:28; Luke 13:12; John 4:21; 8:10; 20:13). Jesus would use this term again for His mother while on the cross (John 19:26).

**(Response #2)** - Christ asks His mother a question. 2:4b

**This question "What do I have to do with you?" is a question designed to show the great gap between who Jesus Christ is and who everyone else is, including His own mother.** This is the God/man and He does not just jump and do things for any human. Jesus is on a Divine Course on His way to the cross. Christ is subtly telling His mother - do you know who you are talking to and what you are asking here? Jesus is Mary's God, not some servant of her whims.

**(Response #3)** - Christ makes to His mother a time declaration. 2:4c

Jesus is now operating on a Divine Time schedule that has been put together by all three Members of the Godhead. The phrase "My time has not yet come" (literally - "the hour of me") is one that is often used by John to refer to "the hour" in which He would permit Himself to suffer and die at the hands of men (John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). His suffering, death and resurrection would be the ultimate proof of His Deity. However, the coming hour refers to other things in John: 1) Universal worship (4:21); 2) True worship in Spirit (4:23); 3) Resurrection from the dead (5:25, 28); 4) Time for Jesus to disclose Himself fully (7:6, 8). There are about three possibilities as to what this means:

**Possibility #1** - It seems to me that what Christ could mean here in this immediate context is that it was not time yet for Him to begin to start doing public miracles to manifest His glory;

**Possibility #2** - It also could mean that it was not time yet for Him to publicly do a miracle that would identify Him as being Israel's Messiah. This program would actually begin, when He would get to Jerusalem and run people out of His temple (John 2:13ff). He would show Himself first to be Israel's Messiah by cleansing the temple in Jerusalem.

**Possibility #3** - There may also be a reference to the time when after His resurrection people would be able to ask things in His name and He would do them. Jesus specifically spoke of this hour (John 16:25-26).

Jesus is saying, I'm on a totally different timetable because I am carrying out the will of My Father. My time is not yet come to be displayed as the glorious God, who will answer the requests of sinful people who ask things in My name.

**FACT #7** – The response of Jesus' mother to Jesus is specifically stated. 2:5

It is very clear that Jesus' mother accepted what Christ said. She was not offended in any way and knew what He was saying was right. What she did tell the servants is to do "whatever" He says. She leaves the matter totally and completely in His hands.

J. Vernon McGee said he always wanted to make a Mother's Day sermon out of this verse and call it "A Mother's Advice" (Vol. 4, p. 379), whatever Jesus Christ tells you to do, do it. If you want to see God do great things with you and for you, then obey Him and do whatever He says to do:

- 1) If you have known sin - confess it and forsake it.
- 2) If you have a fractured relationship with someone - go try to mend it.
- 3) If you have some opportunity for service - do it.
- 4) If you come under conviction - yield to it.

Do what God says and you will see marvelous things.

**FACT #8** – The miracle of Jesus in Cana. 2:6-10

Jesus Christ does His first miracle right here. It is the first of 37 major miracles, mentioned in Scripture, that He did before going to Calvary. **It is so important to see that Jesus would never do any miracle to provide for Himself, such as provide food when hungry, but always did them to help others.** There are four realities of the miracle brought out here:

**(Reality #1)** - Jesus did this miracle by using six stone Jewish purification waterpots. 2:6

Each waterpot held 20 to 30 gallons of water. Christ chose these for two reasons: 1) because they were there, 2) because of the theological implications - He would replace the O.T. law with His N.T. Grace. The Old Law could not satisfy, but His New Grace will. Remember the Law was given by Moses but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). **Moses first miracle was to turn water into blood. Christ's was to turn water into wine.** Jews purified themselves by washings before, during and after their meals (Matt. 15:1-2) and these waterpots were used to hold water for that purpose. God does not need fancy people who look all polished and glorious. He looks for old, empty, waterpots. He doesn't look for us because we are so wonderfully talented. He looks for sinners that He can transform. People broken, people bruised, battered and worn. He does the miraculous with instruments like that. Sometimes people will say – "I want to use my talents for God." The heart is right in this but what we need to realize is He doesn't need our talents; He is looking for empty waterpots.

**(Reality #2)** - Jesus did this miracle by having servants fill the waterpots to the brim with water . 2:7

He obviously could have spoken the water into the pots, but He used people to assist Him in the miracle. They were responsible to do what they humanly could - namely obey His word and fill the waterpot and then He would do the rest - turn the water into wine. God can do the miraculous, but He lets us be part of the process. For example, God may choose to heal a sickness, but we must go to the doctor.

**(Reality #3)** - Jesus did this miracle by having servants draw out liquid and take it to the head waiter. 2:8

Again, notice how Jesus is using his servants to take the water to others. These are not His own servants, but He uses all kinds of people to accomplish His will.

**(Reality #4)** - The headwaiter drank the water that was now transformed into the best wine . 2:9-10

Most of the time, the host would serve the best wine at the beginning of the banquet and save the worst wine for the end, when the senses were somewhat dull. But the head waiter noticed that this was the best wine that had been at this banquet. Why? What made it the best? What made it so good? A miraculous touch of Jesus Christ.

It is too bad that people can't get their hands on a barrel of this wine. After all He made about 150-180 gallons of it. Think of the icon value if any of this had been preserved.

**Now notice verse 11** - this is the beginning of His signs to display the glory of God (John 1:14), the only begotten of the Father. What are these signs all about? They are signs of His Deity. The impact was that His own disciples believed on Him, which means they believed He is God. It strengthened their faith. This is the first miracle of Jesus.

Jesus will transform any into being the best if we let Him touch our lives. Jesus' mother Mary said it well - Do what He tells you to do. I have literally seen Jesus Christ do this kind of miracle in people's lives. I have literally seen Him change wine into water - an alcoholic came to Christ and stopped drinking. I have literally seen Him change drugs into vitamins. I have literally seen Him change a woman of the sordid streets into a woman of the sacred church. Jesus is still in the business of doing this same miracle today. You obey His Word and do what He tells you and you are heading to a miraculous transformation. **Don't ever think that if you turn your life over to Jesus Christ you are heading to a depressing existence; your existence will be as exciting as the best wine.**

When one missionary was appealing for volunteers to help him in a foreign country, he said, "I can't promise you much money, but I can promise you the time of your lives." You believe in Jesus Christ and then purpose to obey His Word and you'll have the time of your life. You won't end in depression like Hemmingway, but in exhilaration like the people of Cana.