

Chapter 4: The Abundance of Jesus

John 2:1–12

The Word has become flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), and John the Baptist has revealed the Incarnate Word (Jesus) as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), even sending his own disciples to follow after Jesus (John 1:35). Then, in the last stage of his *preparation* for ministry, Jesus has gathered to himself the beginnings of his disciples (John 2:2). Without further preparation, Jesus now begins the course of work that he has come to do. While we still might expect that Jesus would choose to make some kind of a big splash for his launch into public ministry, Jesus nevertheless performs the first of his miraculous signs to manifest his glory (John 2:11) not from the top of the temple in Jerusalem, but in secret at a wedding feast in backwater Cana in Galilee, where the (likely poor) bridegroom has run out of wine (John 2:3).¹

John's purposes in relaying us this story go far beyond simply providing us an anecdote of Jesus' getting someone out of a problem. Instead, this miracle of turning the water into wine is a *sign* that symbolizes and *signifies* something about Jesus, both in his identity and his mission. Let us turn our attention to John's narrative with an ear carefully attuned to hear how Jesus manifests his glory through this, the first of his miracles.

"My Hour Has Not Yet Come" (John 2:1–5)

The first verse of our passage gives us some basic background material for this story: "On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples" (John 2:1–2). From this, we learn a little about the setting of this story, including the story's time (this event took place three days after Jesus promised Nathanael that he would see great things), its place (Cana in Galilee), and its characters (the mother of Jesus, Jesus, and his disciples). These pieces of information are historically true and valuable on their own; however, John also uses these basic elements for his own literary and theological emphases, as we will see.

"On the third day..."

Previously, we have observed the sequence of days recorded in John 1. On the first day, a delegation from the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem question John the Baptist concerning his identity. On the next day (the second day), John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The next (third) day, John the Baptist sends two of his own disciples to follow after Jesus (John 1:35), and the next (fourth) day, Jesus tells Philip to follow him (John 1:43). By Jewish standards of counting days, "on the third day" would include the fourth day in the sequence as the first of these next three days so that this "third day" would be the sixth day of the week.² (In a similar way, Resurrection Sunday is the *third* day after Jesus' death by inclusively

counting Friday as the *first* day.) Assuming that the first day of this week was Sunday, then this miracle took place on a Friday. This does not necessarily mean that the wedding itself took place on the sixth day of the week, since wedding parties lasted a full week, but simply that the *miracle* took place on the sixth day.³ Why, though, would John go to such detail in his narrative to tell us about a sequence of six days, especially when this is the only place in John's Gospel that John provides "a careful record of a sequence of days"?

Alternately, some have suggested that the text may include a seventh day in this series, giving us a complete week here. Some argue that the prologue of the Gospel provides the real first day in this sequence, so that "The light shines in the darkness" (John 1:5) matches the first day of creation, when God said, "Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3).⁵ Others offer the possibility that John may have skipped over a Sabbath day in the middle of this seven day series.⁶ More plausibly, D. A. Carson contends that the conversation between Andrew and the unnamed disciple must have finished off the third day (remember—the conversation began "about the tenth hour", or possibly 4:00pm; John 1:39), which would make Andrew's finding his brother Simon take place on the fourth day.⁷ If so, the "next day" when Jesus tells Philip to "Follow me" (John 1:43) would become the fifth day, and "the third day" in John 2:1 would become the seventh day. If this is the case, and we are reading about a full seven-day week, Carson then suggests possible connections between this week and the week of creation, or between the seventh day in this sequence at the wedding feast and the seventh day of the week, which is the Sabbath day.⁸ Is Jesus, the Word through whom all things were made (John 1:3), now beginning his work of *new* creation with this first, full week of his public ministry? Since Jesus performs his miracle on the Sabbath (seventh) day, is he transforming water from the jars for Jewish purification *and* transforming the way that we should view the Sabbath (cf. 5:16ff.; 7:21–24; 9:16)?

These are strong possibilities that we would not be imposing onto the larger context of the Gospel of John; however, this interpretation depends on the speculative addition of another day in this sequence of days, despite the fact that John is so careful through the rest of the week to tell us when each "next day" begins. So, in the case of D. A. Carson's suggestion, is it possible that Andrew rushed out later that same night to bring his brother Simon to Jesus rather than waiting until the next morning? While these suggestions (especially Carson's) are not impossible, John's specificity in telling exactly when each new day starts makes it hard to argue that John intended us to see a sequence of seven days, rather than six.

Thankfully, we have another clue to help us solve this question in the next section of John's Gospel. There, we read about Jesus' cleansing of the temple (John 2:13–22). When the Jewish leaders demand a sign to authenticate his authority to do such a thing (John 2:18), Jesus responds by saying, "Destroy this temple, and *in three days* I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Both in the beginning and the end of chapter 2, John speaks of "the third day" or "three days," and then he does not again mention three/third day(s) at any other point in the Gospel. Craig Keener writes:

If John also intends some theological significance, the most likely additional connection is with the tradition of Jesus' resurrection on the third day, a connection the reader may make when she or he reaches 2:19–20, particularly if the reader had paused over the "third day" in 2:1. ("Three" and "third" occur nowhere else with days in the entire Gospel.) The purpose of this probable *inclusio* is to bind the two paragraphs together, so that they interpret one another; the sign of 2:1–11 thus points to the ultimate sign of the resurrection (2:18–19), and

Jesus' assault on the institution of the temple must be read in the setting aside of the ceremonial pots in 2:1–11.⁹

In other words, John wants us to read the miracle of the water into wine in conjunction with Jesus' cleansing of the temple, and he signals this intention through an "inclusio" (that is, the use of similar "book-ends" to mark a beginning and an end of a cohesive section of Scripture) by the third/three day(s) phrase. John 2:1–22, then, is a single "pericope" (that is, a cohesive section of Scripture), so that while we study this miracle of turning water into wine, we must do so with an eye forward to Jesus' cleansing of the temple, and *vice versa* when we study Jesus' cleansing of the temple next. The two stories *together* bear witness to the nature and purpose of Jesus' work and mission in this world. George Beasley-Murray puts it this way: "whoever understands the miracle of the wine and the cleansing of the temple has the key to the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus and their outcome in the salvation of the kingdom and existence of the Church."¹⁰

Cana in Galilee

The town of Cana in Galilee was so insignificant that we do not even know today where it stood. There were, in fact, a few towns named Cana, which is probably why John added the modifier "in Galilee," preventing his readers from mistakenly thinking that he was writing about one of the other towns named Cana.¹¹ Nathanael is also from Cana in Galilee (John 21:2), so it is possible that the bride and groom invite Jesus' mother, Jesus, and his disciples because of their connection to Nathanael.¹² Beyond that, we know almost nothing about this little town—not even the names of the bride and groom in this wedding.

Still, John has a very clear purpose for letting us know the location of this wedding event. Since Jesus turns water into wine here as the first of his signs (John 2:11), Cana in Galilee is the place where Jesus begins his public ministry, which is significant enough to record. From here, Jesus will travel to Capernaum (John 2:12), then to Jerusalem (John 2:13), then to Samaria (John 4:4), and then ultimately *back* to Cana in Galilee (John 4:46). Just as the time of "the third day" or "three days" (John 2:1, 19–20) connects John 2:1–12 with John 2:13–22 as one cohesive unit of Scripture, so the place of Cana in Galilee marks out John 2–4 as the "first great cycle" of Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of John.¹³ Literarily, the place of Cana of Galilee signals the top and the tail (the beginning and end) of an inclusio marking off a larger pericope beyond the smaller pericope of John 2:1–22. These structural markers will be critical as we seek to understand each text within its surrounding context in the larger Gospel of John.

"They have no wine."

At this scene, on the third day in Cana in Galilee, we first read about the presence of Jesus' mother (John 2:1). Since she learns about the lack of wine, many Bible scholars suggest that Mary (who is never named in the Gospel of John) was helping with the preparation and serving at the wedding.¹⁴ In addition to Mary, Jesus and his disciples also attend. This is the first time the word "disciple" is used in reference to Jesus (cf. John 1:35, 37), and the word "means more than pupil or scholar, namely a follower and adherent, i.e., one who accepts the instruction given him and makes it his rule and norm."¹⁵ Certainly, Jesus' disciples were a long way from being "fully trained" and, hence, "like [their] teacher" (Luke 6:40). Nevertheless, they are considered to be Jesus' disciples right

from the beginning of their learning and training.

In the course of the wedding party, the wine supply runs short, so Jesus' mother says to him, "They have no wine" (John 2:3). Now, the wine used here could not have been unfermented grape juice, as the technology to keep grape juice from fermenting did not exist at the time; however, this wine almost certainly was diluted, perhaps with as many as four parts water to every one part of wine, since ancient peoples considered undiluted wine dangerous.¹⁶ The financial responsibility for ensuring that there was a sufficient supply of wine at this party fell on the bridegroom, and running short of wine would have been deeply shameful in that culture. More than the emotional and social consequences, running out of wine could have possibility even opened the bridegroom up to a lawsuit from the relatives of the bride, since shame would have come to them too because of the lack of wine.¹⁷

Ultimately, as we will see, the contrast in this passage is between the emptiness and incompleteness of the old covenant law of Moses (symbolized by the six stone jars for the Jewish rites of purification; John 2:6) with the completeness and abundance of Jesus (cf. John 1:17). Mary's words, then, not only describe an historic reality of a shortage of wine at a real wedding party, but also as a symbolic indictment against the incompleteness of the Mosaic law.¹⁸

"My hour has not yet come."

It is unclear what Mary expected by going to her son Jesus in this way. Plausibly, Mary may have merely been thinking out loud, or, on the other extreme, she may have gone to Jesus precisely because she expected him to do something miraculous, but John does not give us insights into Mary's intentions. Instead, John directs our attention to Jesus' response to his mother's words: "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4).

While "Woman" sounds disrespectful to our ears, Jesus certainly did not mean it as such. Indeed, Jesus addresses his mother in the same way when he puts her under the care of John (the beloved disciple) as his life slowly slips away from him on the cross (John 19:26). In that case, the context of Jesus' last loving act of ensuring the well-being of his mother forbids us from interpreting any rudeness or disrespect by calling his mother "Woman." Instead, we might translate this word in a way that brings out the respect that Jesus showed his mother, perhaps with something like "Lady," although American English does not have a good counterpart.¹⁹

Nevertheless, Jesus' words here do contain some kind of rebuke for Mary. Literally, the phrase that the ESV translates as "what does this have to do with me?" is something more like, "What to me and to you, Woman?" This phrase, "What to me and to you," is a sharp Semitic expression that we might paraphrase with our own expression, "Mind your own business."²⁰ This does not mean that Jesus spoke to his mother rudely, but it does mean that Jesus here seeks to communicate to his mother that she "must no longer think of him as being merely her son," but instead "must begin to look upon Jesus as her Lord."²¹ Remember, this is the first public sign that Jesus performs (John 2:11). Up to this point, he has pursued a quiet life, taking up the family business of carpentry (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), and probably caring for his mother after his adoptive father Joseph died (most likely), since we do not read anything about Joseph after Jesus was 12 years old (Luke 2:41–51). Now that Jesus is beginning his public ministry, his relationship with his mother must change. As Herman Ridderbos writes, "Jesus cannot seize this hour, that is, this beginning, beforehand—even if his own mother urges him to do so."²² Therefore, in Jesus' statement, we see another aspect of *incompleteness*

in this passage: the incompleteness of *time*.

This phrase, “My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4), is crucial, not only for understanding this passage, but for understanding the whole Gospel of John, where the “coming hour” comes up many times.²³ Ultimately, the “coming hour” refers to Jesus’ glorification by being lifted up to die on the cross (John 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1), so that Jesus’ enemies cannot harm him until his hour comes (John 7:30; 8:20). Yet, while the crucifixion of Jesus may represent the fullness and complete fulfillment of Jesus’ hour (“...my time has not yet *fully* come”; John 7:8), there is also a sense in which Jesus’ “hour” stretches across his entire public ministry. So, while Jesus’ hour has not yet come *at all* when Jesus responds to his mother in John 2:4, and while Jesus’ hour will not *fully* come until the cross, Jesus’ hour begins by this miracle at Cana, which is “the first of his signs” that “manifested his glory.”²⁴

And indeed, even in this soft rebuke from her son, Mary apparently hears some kind of promise since she tells the servants, “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2:5).²⁵ These “servants” are not the kind of bondservants (*douloi*) who are bound to obey the orders they receive, but attendants or voluntary assistants (*diakonoi*) who might well ignore Jesus, and Mary wants to make sure that they do indeed do what Jesus tells them to do.²⁶ Interestingly, these are the words that Pharaoh spoke to the Egyptians during the days of the famine, telling them, “Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do” (Gen. 41:55). In those days, it was a lack of food that Joseph would address, while here Jesus will address the lack of wine.²⁷ Additionally, it was through Joseph’s administration of the famine relief that he manifested himself to his brothers, the sons of Israel (Gen. 45:3), and it will be through this miracle that Jesus will manifest his glory to the sons of Israel living in his own day (John 2:11; cf. John 1:11).

“You have kept the good wine until now” (John 2:6–10)

Jesus’ solution to the lack of wine is astonishing:

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. 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 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.” (John 2:6–10)

As throughout the Gospel of John, the details we read here are of the highest importance for our interpretation; however, we must avoid stretching the details by imposing meanings onto these details that John does not intend. The miracles Jesus performs in the Gospel of John are more than raw displays of power, but they all have *specific* significances beyond themselves to explain some aspect of Jesus’ identity or his overall mission.²⁸ John gives us the details of the miracles, then, provide us direction for understanding that greater significance, especially in this case when Jesus does not provide a discourse to explain the meaning of his miracle, as he does in several of his other signs in this Gospel.

Here, the details in question are that we have six stone water jars, large enough to hold twenty or thirty gallons (literally, “two or three measures”). These are not just any stone water jars, but jars that are used specifically “for the Jewish rites of purification.” Jesus instructs that these jars be filled with water, and so the servants fill them up to the brim (John 2:7). Jesus then instructs the servants to draw out some of this water to take to the master of the feast, and by the time the master tastes this water, it has already turned to wine. We are not told if this miracle of transformation happened immediately upon drawing the water out of the jars, or only when the master went to taste the water-turned-wine. We know that the master is unaware that the wine had previously been water (John 2:9), and that the master declares the wine to be the “good wine” that should have typically been served earlier in the feasting (John 2:10). The symbolism here is rich and complex.

Six Stone Jars for Purification

The detail that these were stone jars is important, since stone jars were impervious to becoming ceremonially unclean, unlike clay jars which had to be destroyed if they became unclean (Lev. 11:33).²⁹ John tells us explicitly that these jars were used for “the Jewish rites of purification,” which in the context of the Gospel of John is an extremely important detail, since John has already contrasted Moses and the law with the fullness of grace and truth that comes through Jesus Christ (John 1:16–17). In some way that we will need to untangle, John is setting up a contrast between the water of purification in the Mosaic law and the good wine that Jesus makes.

The details of the stone jars and the rites of purification are fairly universally recognized by biblical scholars in the context of this story. More controversially, however, is the detail of there being “six” stone jars. Why do we need to know that there are six of these jars? D. A. Carson is representative of many scholars who do not see good evidence for making too much of the number six in this passage:

Some see in the number six a reference to incompleteness, one less than seven: the Jewish dispensation was incomplete until the coming of Jesus, who performs this miracle on the seventh day (cf. notes on 2:1–2). That view may well be strained, for the miracle concerns the transformation of water, not the provision of an additional water jar.³⁰

Earlier, we evaluated Carson’s speculative argument that the miracle at Cana takes place on the seventh day, which Carson reiterates here to draw a contrast between the six jars and the seventh day of the week on which (he believes) this miracle took place. If we instead follow *John’s* careful identification of each new day in this sequence, then we should remember that this miracle in fact happens on the *sixth* day of the week, and that Jesus performs the miracle out of *six* stone jars.

In this light, we begin to see that this story uses multiple images of incompleteness. Not only does the miracle happen out of six stone jars on the sixth day of the week, but the whole miracle addresses a shortage of wine, and, at first, Jesus protests his own involvement because of the incompleteness of time (“My hour has not yet come”). Moreover, the Jewish rites of purification were a notoriously incomplete, never-ending process. In the same way that the author of Hebrews observed that the old covenant sacrificial system continued unceasingly in contrast to Christ’s once-for-all redemptive work (Heb. 9:11–10:18), so also the Jewish rites of purification washings had to be performed perpetually, for there was no once-for-all washing that could cleanse an old covenant

worshiper, since the world was filled with elements that would (once again) bring ceremonial uncleanness (cf. Lev. 11–15). It is into this overall picture of incompleteness that Jesus enters to bring joy-filled, transformed, fullness-of-time *abundance*.

Additionally, we should not miss the link between the purification of these jars with Jesus' purification of the temple in the next story (John 1:13–22). We have already observed the third/three day(s) link between the two narratives (John 2:1, 18–19), but the two pictures of purification also stand together. In both cases, Jesus enters into an old covenant setting (first, by using the six stone jars for the Jewish rites of purification, and second, into the temple itself), but then transforms that old covenant setting in a way that points forward toward the glory of the new covenant that he will usher in. By replacing the water for purification with wine, Jesus points forward to the eschatological feast that symbolizes the coming of the kingdom of God.³¹ By purifying the temple, Jesus points forward to the day when the temple of his body would be destroyed and then raised up after three days for the perpetual purification of God's new temple, his church (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:19–22; 1 Pet. 2:4–5).

“Now draw some out...”

Jesus gives two instructions to the wedding attendants in the course of this miracle. First, Jesus tells them to “Fill the jars with water,” and we read that the servants “filled them up to the brim” (John 2:7). In the context of a story filled with themes of incompleteness—and specifically, the incompleteness of the old covenant in contrast with the abundance that Jesus provides—it seems significant that Jesus' method of bringing this miracle about begins with filling up these jars with water. Although admittedly this is speculative, is it possible that Jesus is demonstrating that his abundance comes not by *rejecting* the old covenant outright, but by fulfilling the old covenant in its fullness? The word here for “fill” (*gemizō*) is not the same word used often in the Gospel of John (*plēroō*) that can mean both to fill something up (John 3:29; 12:3; 15:11; 16:6, 24; 17:13) as well as to fulfill prophecies (John 12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 18:9, 32; 19:24, 36); however, in my judgment, this interpretation nevertheless fits with this passage as a whole.

Some argue, in contrast, that this emphasis on the fullness of the water jars merely emphasizes the great abundance of wine that Jesus gives to this couple.³² Yet, we never actually read that *all* of this water turns to wine. Certainly, the point of this story is that Jesus provides an abundance of wine to overcome the shortfall, but we do not know if that abundance includes the fullness of all six jars, since we only read that what is drawn out becomes wine. John tells us only of the fullness of the *water* in the jars (a symbol of the old covenant), not the subsequent fullness of transformed *wine* after Jesus' miracle.

Second, Jesus says, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast,” which the servants also do: “So they took it” (John 2:8). The important detail in this part of Jesus' instructions is probably not that the water must be drawn out (how else would the water in the jars reach the master of the feast?), but rather the word “now.” Note that the master of the feast also uses the word “now” (“But you have kept the good wine until *now*”; John 2:10), and remember Jesus' words from earlier: “My hour has not yet come” (John 2:4). His reluctance to perform the miracle is not out of any laziness or lack of desire to help this couple, but out of the recognition that he must not perform any signs until his hour has come. So, when Jesus says “now,” he is telling us that his hour has *now* come—not “fully” (cf. John 7:8) by immediately moving to the cross, but as the first of his signs to

manifest his glory (John 2:11). Ridderbos writes:

What seems dominant is the salvation–historical perspective, the perspective of the divinely appointed “hour” of the revelation of Jesus’ glory. All the emphasis comes to lie on the divinely appointed time as a result of Mary’s premature pressure. In this way Mary herself represents the role of believing Israel, which impatiently awaits the breakthrough of the promised salvation but must await the moment when “the time is fulfilled,” when the “fullness of time” has come (cf. Mk. 1:15; Gl. 4:4). Corresponding with this is the pronouncement of the steward to the bridegroom: “You have kept the good wine until now.” The “now” is the breakthrough initiated by Jesus, just as he himself, having first said “not yet” to Mary, at the decisive moment says to the servants, “Now draw some out.” For at that moment the water has become wine and the hour has come (Cf. 4:23; 5:25).³³

At this moment, with this miracle, the fullness of time has *now* begun.

“But you have kept the good wine until now.”

Again, when the master of the feast marvels that the bridegroom has kept the good wine until “now,” he is underscoring the theme of the fullness of time that has *now* come in the beginning of Jesus’ hour. John tells us that the master of the feast does not know that this wine came from water (John 2:9), but more importantly, the master of the feast also has no idea that his words serve as “a perfect characterization of the situation that has come into being with Jesus’ coming and work.”³⁴ Just as when Caiaphas unintentionally expounds the significance of Jesus’ death (John 11:49–52), so here the words of the master of the feast transcend his own intentions to bear witness to the glory of Jesus.

And indeed, this whole story seems to bear greater theological significance than it appears at first when we set this miracle beside Jesus’ teaching recorded for us in the Synoptic Gospels. Only John gives us this story of the miracle at Cana, but the Synoptic Gospels are filled with stories of wedding feasts that teach about the kingdom of God (Matt. 22:1–14; 25:1–13; Luke 12:36), and Jesus explicitly contrasts himself and his teaching with the old covenant by the image of new wine needing new wineskins (Luke 5:37–39)—a statement that immediately follows Jesus’ comparison of himself as the bridegroom in the midst of his eating and drinking disciples (Luke 5:33–35).³⁵ The different Gospels give us different angles on these themes, but they all testify to the same reality.

Nevertheless, we must not blend this miracle in with all the other passages to the point that it loses its unique emphasis. Although Jesus *is* the true bridegroom waiting to receive his church as a spotless bride at the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6–8), John’s specific emphasis in this narrative is not to speak of Jesus as the true bridegroom, but of Jesus as the good wine—not the good wine who needs new wineskins, but the good wine who has been kept back until now.³⁶ And with this sign, the good wine fills up all that is incomplete and lacking with abundance, replacing shame with joy at the wedding feast of God’s people.

“The First of his Signs” (John 2:11–12)

John closes this narrative with a summary and a transition: “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. 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 2:11–12). Importantly, John tells us directly that turning water into wine is not simply a miracle, but a “sign,” a term we find in John more than in any other Gospel.³⁷ By classifying this work as a sign, John directs us to look for the *meaning* of the sign, since a sign does not exist for its own sake, but for the purposes of pointing beyond itself to the reality that the sign signifies. D. A. Carson writes:

John prefers the simple word ‘signs’: Jesus’ miracles are never simply naked displays of power, still less neat conjuring tricks to impress the masses, but *signs*, *significant* displays of power that point beyond themselves to the deeper realities that could be perceived with the eyes of faith. Jesus himself in this Gospel refers to his miracles and to his other activity as his ‘work’ or ‘works’ (e.g. 5:36; NIV ‘miracle(s)’ in 7:21; 10:25).³⁸

As we have seen, the sign in this case points beyond the simple production of wine to the way in which the ministry of Jesus provides joy-filled abundance where previously there was only shameful incompleteness through the purification of the law. Jesus has much more to do and to teach about this subject, but John puts this story at the beginning of the Gospel of John not only because this story came chronologically first (John 2:11), but also because the nature of this sign provides a symbolic foundation for understanding the rest of what Jesus will do to transform the waters of old covenant purification into the good wine of the kingdom that has now, finally, come.

Additionally, John explains that Jesus “manifested his glory” through this sign, so that his disciples believed in him. John the Baptist used the same word for “manifested” (*phaneroō*) to explain that he came baptizing with water in order that Jesus “might be *revealed* to Israel.” This word is used eight times in the Gospel of John (John 1:31; 2:22; 3:21; 7:4; 9:3; 17:6; 21:1 (x2), 14), and then nine times again in 1 John (1 John 1:2 (x2); 2:19, 28; 3:2 (x2), 5, 8; 4:9). John uses this word to describe the manifestation of Jesus in the flesh, along the lines of the idea he conveyed (though without using this word) in John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Indeed, this verse sounds very similar to what John writes in 1 John 1:2 where he does use this word twice: “the life was *made manifest*, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was *made manifest* to us.”

The point John is making in John 2:11, then, is to explain that these signs uniquely manifest the glory of Jesus—not only because they display his power, but because, as signs, they symbolize and explain the nature and purpose of his power. Jesus doesn’t merely “put on the ritz.” Instead, he uses his miracle-working power to manifest himself to us, beginning with this sign of turning the water into wine.

Last, in the final verse of this passage, John tells us about Jesus’ traveling to Capernaum (John 2:12). Nothing significant happens there, since the next thing we read about in John 2:13ff is that Jesus then heads to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. John’s purpose in telling us, it seems, has more to do with narrating an overall course of travel that begins in Cana (John 2:1) and then ends in Cana (John 4:46) into a single literary pericope, as we discussed above. This trip to Capernaum, then, marks the extent of his travel, documenting a clear path Jesus takes between his stops in Cana.

Notes

1. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 158.
2. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 102. Ridderbos does not detect any theological significance to the six days charter from John 1:29–2:1 (102–03).
3. “This may not have been the first day of the wedding, since weddings lasted for a whole week (see Judg. 14:12), and it is unlikely that the wine ran out immediately.” Köstenberger, *John*, 91.
4. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 168.
5. Cited disapprovingly in Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 102.
6. Köstenberger, *John*, 91.
7. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 167–68.
8. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 168.
9. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 497–98.
10. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 31.
11. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 113–14.
12. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 496.
13. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 97.
14. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John’s Gospel*, 187.
15. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John’s Gospel*, 186.
16. “Wine was not merely unfermented ‘grape juice,’ as some popular modern North American apologists for abstinence have contended. Before hermetic sealing and refrigeration, it was difficult to prevent some fermentation, and impossible to do so over long periods of time. Nor was wine drunk only to purify the water, as some have also claimed; much spring water in the Mediterranean is palatable, and many Greeks and Romans viewed it as medicinally helpful. At the same time, the alcoholic content of wine was not artificially increased through distillation, and people in the ancient Mediterranean world always mixed water with the wine served with meals, often two to four parts water per ever part wine; undiluted wine was considered dangerous.” (Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 500.)
17. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 169.
18. “In the place of the law given through Moses (the Jewish rites of purification) grace and truth in all their fullness have now come through Jesus Christ. In this light Mary’s statement, ‘They have no wine,’ as a statement about the regime of the law, gains deeper meaning. At the same time, in this focus on the person of Jesus as ‘the good wine, kept until now’ lies the criterion of what this fullness of joy and salvation holds and means for Israel and the entire world: the rejection of every manner of life and every kind of future expectation that does not have its all-sustaining foundation in his person and work (cf., e.g., 6:26f).” (Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 108–10.)
19. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 115.
20. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 105.
21. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 115.
22. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 106.
23. “The idea of the hour that is ‘coming’ takes on various contours of John’s predominantly realized eschatology throughout the Gospel:

2:4 not yet come

4:21 universal worship, coming

4:23 Spirit and true worship, coming and already is
 5:25 resurrection of the dead, coming and already is
 5:28 those in the tombs (literal dead) raised, coming
 7:6 ‘time’ (=hour) of his revelation (cf. 7:4; 1 John 2:28)
 7:8 ‘time,’ revelation, disclosing himself at the feast
 7:30 death, not yet come
 8:20 death, not yet come
 (11:9 irrelevant; 12:7; ‘day of burial’)
 12:23, 27 glorification/death
 13:1 death
 16:2 *disciples’ hour: their suffering/death*
 16:21 death (messianic travail)
 16:25 (probably) after resurrection (v. 26: ‘that day’: eschatological language for present age)
 16:32 Jesus’ death and their fear, coming and already come
 17:1 glorification of Son” (Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 507.)

24. “In this Gospel the “Hour” of Jesus commonly denotes his death and glorification (see 7:30; 8:20; 13:1; 17:1). An immediate reference to that hour is scarcely thinkable in this context; it must relate to the service of the divine sovereignty on which Jesus now embarks, which will (as the Evangelist knows) culminate in the “lifting up” on the cross.” (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 34–35.)

25. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 106.

26. “Mary speaks not to Jesus but to the δῆκονοι. This means that she is wholly satisfied with her Son’s reply, which also is evidenced by what she tells ‘the servants.’ These evidently had not heard her conversation with Jesus. The term δῆκονοι is significant. They are not δοῦλοι, ‘slaves’ or ‘servants’ in the lowest sense of our English word, who just obey orders and no more. These are voluntary assistants, come in to help in a friendly way with the work at the wedding feast. They work for the help and the benefit their work brings to the young people and to their festive guests. They lay hand to what is needed of their own accord or at the request of those who manage affairs. Now Jesus was a guest and had no hand in managing affairs; hence to receive orders from him would sound strange to these δῆκονοι. On the other hand, Mary’s word to them shows her insight in expecting from Jesus an order that itself would sound extraordinary to persons bidden to carry it out. These voluntary assistants might thus hesitate and shake their wise heads, even smile and refuse to act. So as the one who manages the work and directs these assistants come to lend a helping hand Mary gives them positive directions.” (Lenski, *The Interpretation of John’s Gospel*, 191.)

27. Köstenberger, *John*, 96.

28. “But this does not mean that exegesis can end with mere acknowledgement of miracle as such, as supernatural event. This Gospel itself explicitly opposes that notion (cf. 2:23ff.; 4:48, etc.), and does so so emphatically that by comparison with passages like 10:37ff. some scholars think that they must speak of a certain ambivalence toward miracle in the Fourth Gospel. Whatever we think of this last point, a distinctive of the Fourth Gospel is its repeated linking of miracles with lengthy conversations focused on the meaning of the miracles in the framework of Jesus’ self-revelation as the Christ, the Son of God (so chs. 5, 6, 9, and 11). If one fails to see that connection and hence also the deeper spiritual significance of the miracles, then one has not ‘seen’ the signs (6:26), and faith that rests solely on miracle ‘as such’ has fundamentally forfeited its claim to that name (cf., e.g., 2:23ff.; 3:2 with 3:11f.; 4:48).

All this, in keeping with the Evangelist’s intention, confronts the interpreter with a double demand: on the one hand, to explain the miracle within a specific historical context, on the other to explain its intent within the framework of Jesus’ entire self-revelation.” (Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*: 100–01.)

29. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 160, n. 29.

30. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 174.

31. “The motif of abundance of wine often occurs in prophecy as characteristic for the glory of the coming kingdom of God (cf. Is. 25:6; Am. 9:13, 14; Jr. 31:12ff.; cf. also Gn. 49:11), as it does also in Jewish visions of the future. But also in Jesus’ own preaching “new wine” is the symbol of the time of salvation that has come and is still to come (cf. Mk. 2:22 par.; Lk. 22:18, 30). Joy and a festive meal, specifically a wedding meal, are naturally associated with this motif of wine (cf. Mk. 2:19; Mt. 22:2).” (Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 108–09.)

32. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 116.

33. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 108.

34. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 108.

35. “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 richness and the fullness of eternal life in Christ, the water of the law into the wine of the gospel. While this ‘sign’ is recorded only in this Gospel, it should not be overlooked that there are partial parallels in the Synoptics. Thus the image of a wedding feast is used with reference to the kingdom of God (Matt. 22:1–14; 25:1–13; Luke 12:36), and the disciples in the presence of Christ are likened to wedding guests rejoicing with the bridegroom (Mark 2:19). Again the contrast of Jesus’ message with Judaism is illustrated by the wine and the wineskins (Luke 5:37ff.).” (Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 155.)

36. “But we need to bear in mind the uniqueness of the salvation–historical (or ‘eschatological’ character of the present narrative. This applies, notably, to the so-called messianic wedding motif, which is made central by some interpreters. Although in John, too, Jesus is once depicted as a bridegroom (3:19), there is not a single hint in this wedding story that Jesus is acting as host or bridegroom (cf. Mk. 2:19; Rv. 19:7; 21:2, 9; Is. 62:4ff.). The events associated with the wedding remain completely in the background. Jesus is not the host here; he is the wine, more specifically the ‘good wine’ reserved until now (vs. 10). In this regard there is here a striking resemblance with the multiplication of the loaves, surely also intended as an ‘eschatological’ meal, where, according to the traditional story taken over by John, Jesus is the host (cf. 6:11), but where in the ensuing discussion with the Jews all the emphasis is shifted to Jesus as the bread, the true bread come down from heaven, as later he is the (divinely promised) ‘good Shepherd,’ ‘true vine,’ and ‘true light’ (10:14; 15:1; 1:9; 8:12; see also 4:10ff.; 7:37ff.).” (Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 109.)

37. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 117.

38. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 175.