

**NEW WINE, NEW TEMPLE**  
**John 2:1-22**

**Dr. Howard Batson**  
**First Baptist Church**  
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**I. New Wine**

Every family that hosts a wedding is well aware of the potential horror of running out of food before the festivities are finished! For two consecutive summers, we invited the entire membership of the First Baptist Church of Amarillo to join us for a celebration at the Amarillo Civic Center—a reception for a daughter’s wedding (one in 2016 and one in 2017). Unsure about how many guests would attend the reception, we bought way too much food, leaving lots of leftovers. Among the leftovers were 400 pieces of wedding cake, 300 barbecue sandwiches, four restaurant-sized bags of chips and accompanying dips, gallons of unopened hot sauce, and enough chicken sandwiches to make the Colonel blush.

Why all the over-ordering, all the leftovers, all the waste at the wedding? Because I did not want to run out of food when I had invited 5,000 guests. There is no more helpless feeling as a host than to realize the loaves and the fishes are few, and there is no Jesus around to multiply the manna.

In our first story, the bridegroom, the host of ancient weddings, was facing humiliation because he ran out of wine right in the middle of a seven-day wedding reception.

Turning Water into Wine (2:1-11)

A Wedding (2:1-3)

The story begins with the words, “On the third day.” Some scholars see a reference to the resurrection of Jesus—“on the third day”—in the opening of this story. The symbolism is clear: on the third day, the day of Jesus’ resurrection, the new age of the Messiah begins, a new age represented here by new, better wine. While there might be a subtle hint from the evangelist about Easter in these opening words, they are, more likely, simply a part of his consecutive accounting for a week of ministry in the life of Jesus. Counting seven days in the life of our Lord, we find: Day 1 (1:19-28); Day 2 (1:29-34, “on the next day”); Day 3 (1:35-42, “on the next day”); Day 4 (1:43-51, “on the next day”); Day 7 (2:1-11, “on the third day,” i.e., three days later). Collectively, this week represents the first full week in the ministry of Jesus, a week culminating with the Messiah turning water into wine.

Several scholars see a connection to Genesis. Jesus, the one through whom all has been created (1:3), begins a new creation with his ministry among men.

After the keeping of Jesus’ calendar, we are told that the event at hand is a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Though the wedding couple remains nameless, we are quickly introduced to “the mother of Jesus.” The fact that both Jesus and his mother (and possibly brothers, 2:12) were invited to the same wedding suggests that the occasion was the wedding of a family friend. Mary herself seems

to bear some responsibility for organizing the catering of the affair. No surprise, therefore, that she quickly steps up to deal with the waning supply of wine.

We should not only notice the characters introduced in the story, but also the character who is missing. While Mary is at the wedding, accompanied by her first-born son (and perhaps other children, 2:12) and his disciples, Joseph is nowhere to be found. Early historical traditions make Mary a widow by the time Jesus begins his ministry. Such traditions seem quite plausible, as the last time Joseph is mentioned was when Jesus was age twelve (Luke 2:41-52). Being a widow, Mary would have leaned heavily on her first-born son. No surprise, therefore, that she would look to Jesus to supply what is missing.

While modern-day Baptist weddings often consist of little more than a 30-minute ceremony followed by a two-hour reception, in antiquity, the center of the Jewish wedding event was a celebratory feast which normally lasted for seven days! (I am so very grateful my daughters' weddings did not include a seven-day reception. I would have run out of food, too!)

While our knowledge of ancient Jewish weddings is somewhat limited, we do know, from biblical sources and elsewhere, that the bridegroom and his friends made their way in procession to the bride's house. This was sometimes done at night, when the procession would be a spectacular, torchlight sight. The procession then made its way to the groom's house where there were, no doubt, expressions of goodwill, a religious ceremony, and a wedding banquet to be held for days to come.

The situation is dire; the guests have drunk all the wine. In a culture of shame, the duties of hospitality were not to be taken lightly. Perhaps the bridegroom was poor, and, being unable to make full provision for his guests, he was simply hoping for the best. Even beyond embarrassment, moreover, running out of wine might render the bridegroom's family liable, leading to a lawsuit.

Could I give you a theological insight? Why have we not noticed that in the Bible it is the groom's family that pays for the wedding reception? It's the godly, biblical way – says the daddy with three daughters.

It is embarrassing to run out when you are supposed to be providing refreshments for your guests. At this year's Fall Festival, the weather was warm, much better than forecasted for October 31. The Family Life Center staff had already purchased a mountain of candy, and you brought all the more in bags. So we had, at the very beginning, what should have been an ample supply of chocolate, Kit-Kats, Twix bars, Hershey bars, and bubble gum.

But when we opened the doors, it seemed as if all of Amarillo had decided to come to the First Baptist Fall Festival. Why not? It's a gift from the First Baptist community. It's all free. It's fun – the blow-ups, the games, the candy.

Less than half way through, I noticed that the enormous mountain of candy was down to a molehill. What to do? I turned to my trusted friend, Randy Hale, and asked him where his jeep was parked. We jumped in, ran up to CVS right here at Washington and I-40, and literally bought hundreds and hundreds of dollars of more chocolate. Thank goodness it was on sale, as it was a winding down of Halloween. What do you do with Halloween candy the next day anyway?

So Randy would run to one display, and I to another. We literally chunked the chocolate into the buggy. People were gathered around the registers just taking overs and unders on the First Baptist chocolate tab. Customers behind us were frustrated – I mean, how long does it take to check out \$700 worth of chocolate?

As if we were on a mission, we quickly loaded the Jeep, called ahead for a crew of students to meet us at the car, and rushed in with the back-up candy bars to keep the fun flowing – just in the nick of time.

Why? Because I didn't want to be embarrassed that we'd invited the community to come to a party for which we were not fully prepared.

The groom's family must have been feeling that way on the day that Jesus was asked to supply what was lacking.

Jesus has not performed a single miracle at this point in John's narrative. Despite the fact that we have yet to experience Jesus giving sight to the blind or multiplying the loaves and the fish, his mother is fully confident of his resourcefulness. We must remember that Mary knew the angels had prophetically announced Jesus' birth. She knew, moreover, that she conceived him while still a virgin. And however she struggled to interpret it, she knew that he was the Messiah, the anointed one of God.

My Hour (2:4)

Too much has been made of Jesus' response, "Woman," to his mother, Mary. The expression in Greek is not nearly as cold as it comes across in English translations. Nonetheless, the fact that Jesus refers to her as "Woman," and not "Mother," is an indication that a new stage in their relationship has begun—the stage of his public ministry. Jesus is no longer primarily the son of Mary, or even Joseph, but "the Son of Man" (1:51).

Following the polite, but impersonal, address, Jesus literally says, "What to me and to you?" Greek is full of idioms that were well known to first-century hearers. This idiom is used frequently in the Old Testament Septuagint (Joshua 22:24; 2 Samuel 16:10; 1 Kings 17:18; 2 Kings 3:13), as well as in the New Testament (Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24; 5:7; Luke 4:34; 8:28).

With this expression, Jesus is making clear, at the very beginning of his ministry, that he must be utterly free from any kind of human manipulation or agenda. His only calling is to do the will of his Father (5:30; 8:29).

We must not forget that Mary had birthed him, nursed him, and watched him fall as he learned to walk. She, also, had grown to rely upon him as a family provider—don't forget he was a carpenter! All that must now be subordinated to his divine mission of ushering in the kingdom of God.

Jesus further explains that, "My hour has not yet come." The word for hour (hōra) is a reference often found in John to refer to the passion of Jesus—his death on the cross, his resurrection, and his ascension to glory (7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). Jesus and Mary are operating on two different planes. Mary is primarily worried about the wedding ending with embarrassment; Jesus knows that the true messianic age, his hour, is just around the corner when new wine will flow liberally (Jeremiah 31:12; Hosea 14:7; Amos 9:13-14). Often, Jesus uses imagery of a wedding as a symbol for the arrival of the messianic age (Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1-13).

This whole story, therefore, becomes an acted parable, as Jesus declares the hour of the new wine, the hour of his glorification, has not yet come. Ultimately, Jesus is the bridegroom, and he will supply the new wine of the new age at the ultimate messianic banquet—the celebration of his kingdom having come.

#### Whatever He Says (2:5)

Jesus' mother, Mary, is not overly sensitive to Jesus distancing himself from her urgent agenda. In fact, having placed her request in proper context, she is quite confident that her son will solve the problem. She instructs the help to do "whatever he says to you...."

Best advice ever offered: "Do whatever Jesus asks."

#### Six Stone Water Pots (2:6)

The reader's eye is suddenly drawn to six enormous water pots. Such water pots were used for Jewish ceremonial purification. The "tradition of the elders" held that the Jews could not eat until they gave their hands a ceremonial washing (Mark 7:3-4). We must not miss the enormity of the water pots. One scholar suggests that each vessel held approximately 20 or 30 gallons! Doing the math, therefore, we realize that Jesus' gift to the bridegroom was no less than 150 plus gallons of good wine! The overflowing wine represents the lavish quantity of God's grace, available to those who are children of the new kingdom, attenders of the new messianic banquet.

#### The Brim (2:7-8)

Perhaps the expression "up to the brim" is used to demonstrate that the good wine was not created by adding something to the water. Jesus commands that the liquid be "drawn out" and taken to the "head waiter." While the "ruler of the feast," or "head waiter," is only mentioned here in the New Testament, we can infer that one of the guests was chosen and charged with the duty of being the master of ceremonies.

#### The Good Wine (2:9-10)

Tasting, at last, the very best wine at the wedding, the head waiter called upon the bridegroom to inquire about its unusual quality. Logically, men most often served the best wine first, as the drinkers' palates are still sensitive. As the guests become affected by the drink, the bridegroom slips in a cheaper imitation. Breaking with the custom of his day, this bridegroom has actually "saved the best for last."

#### A Sign of the Times (2:11)

Jesus' miracles are called "signs" (*sēmeia*) in John's Gospel. Like "logos," "sign" is another of John's very powerful and rich words. A sign points beyond itself to something more important. The turning of the water into wine points to (signifies) the real identity of Jesus and the arrival of the kingdom of God.

Throughout this Gospel, there will be six miracles that are designated as "signs," all which point to Jesus as the Messiah (2:1-11; 4:43-54; 5:1-18; 6:1-15; 9:1-41; 11:1-57). The other Gospel writers refer to Jesus' miracles as "mighty works" (*dynamis*, from which we get "dynamite"). Their designation, "mighty deeds," focuses on the power of Jesus' acts. John uses "sign" to indicate that the miracles point beyond themselves to the arrival of the Messiah.

This very first sign begins the manifestation of Jesus' glory, resulting in belief (v. 11) within the disciples. Ultimately, in this Gospel, his glory is revealed in his crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation. But each step along the course of ministry was a sign of the glory to come. "Belief" is the appropriate response to the signs, as this entire Gospel was written with the intention that we might come to believe (20:30-31).

## **II. New Temple (2:13-22)**

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus only goes to Jerusalem for one Passover, which occurs during the period of his Passion (crucifixion and resurrection). John's Gospel clearly refers to three Passovers, and maybe even four (2:13; 6:4; 11:55; and perhaps 5:1). We are able to conclude that Jesus' earthly ministry lasted between two and three years from the fact that John gives us three or four different Passovers. If we only had the accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we would suppose that Jesus only had one year of ministry, for only one Passover is contained in their Gospels.

### House of Merchandise (2:14-16)

Most likely, Jesus finds merchants peddling their goods in the outer court, the Court of Gentiles. Such merchants kept a ready supply of sacrificial animals for the pilgrims who had traveled too far to bring their own. The "money changers" were there to exchange various coinage from throughout the Roman Empire for the one coinage accepted as appropriate for paying the temple tax, a tax to be paid by Jewish males twenty years of age or older. The exchange ensured that the temple tax was paid with proper coinage—exact weight and pure alloy.

While many commentators focus on the greed of the money changers and sellers of sheep, there is no clear indication in John's account that the merchants were less than upright in their dealings. Notice the play on the word "house." The "Father's house" is not to be a "house of merchandise." Perhaps Jesus is alluding to passages like Zechariah 14:21, where we read, "And on that day, there will no longer be a merchant in the house of the Lord Almighty." Or, perhaps, Malachi 3:1, 3, where we read, "And suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple.... He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver."

Jesus' objection, therefore, does not seem to be so much over their dishonesty as over the lack of purity in their worship. The best way to read this "cleansing of the temple" is that Jesus, like prophets of old acting out their prophecies, comes to the temple with a sweeping messianic action. Jesus is an authority greater than the temple, and he comes as the new temple where God dwells and as the new sacrifice that supersedes and ends all other sacrifices. Rather than focusing on "exchange rates," we should note that Jesus was exchanging the old temple and sacrificial system for himself—the real presence of God.

### The Needed Sign (2:18-22)

The Jewish authorities themselves understood the messianic nature of Jesus' actions—turning over the tables and driving out impure trappings of worship. In fact, if you read the text carefully, you will notice that the Jewish authorities do not even dispute the rightness of his action. Put plainly, they are asking him, "Since you act like you are the Messiah, can you do the signs of the Messiah?" Jesus needed to authenticate his power, as he was claiming to have more authority than those presently in charge of the temple.

To meet their need for a sign, Jesus offers the ultimate miracle. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews object that a building that has been under construction for 46 years could not possibly be rebuilt in three days. But John makes clear (v. 21) that Jesus is referring not to stones and mortar, but to his own body, the true temple of God.

When others demanded a sign from Jesus, he regularly pointed to the resurrection as the only sign that would be given to the people (Matthew 12:39-40f.; 16:4; Luke 11:29). At the trial of Jesus, one of the primary charges against him was that he had said he would destroy the temple and raise it up again (Matthew 26:60f.; Mark 14:57-59). The same was said about him as he hung on the cross (Matthew 27:40; Mark 15:29). Though misconstrued, clearly these words of Jesus were remembered.

Lest the reader be unclear about Jesus’ words, John offers us an interpretation, “He was speaking of the temple of His body” (v. 21). Elsewhere Jesus is also clear that he will be raised in three days (Matthew 12:40). Despite his consistent predictions, the disciples were blind until they gained hindsight following the resurrection.

The new temple, of course, is not one made with stones or mud, but is found as a spiritual temple, the new covenant accomplished by the death and resurrection of Christ. The scripture referred to in verse 22 may well be Psalm 16:10, which is interpreted in Acts 2:31 as referring to the resurrection.

#### Conclusion

The acts of turning the water into wine and turning over the tables in the temple make messianic claims regarding the identity of Jesus. The Messiah, the true bridegroom, is getting ready for a wedding banquet where the new wine of the kingdom will be served to the invited guests. In similar fashion, turning over the tables testifies that Jesus is the Messiah. He acts as one with greater authority than those in charge of the temple. He himself is the new temple, the new place to encounter God. And, unlike the old sacrificial system that accomplishes little, he is the true lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

How will you respond?

John 20:30-31

John 2:11 - the disciples believed

John 2:23 – many believed

And now you?