

# Wedding at Cana: Jesus' First Miracle

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John 2: 1-11

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## Wedding at Cana: Jesus' First Miracle

CLT On-line Course of Study

### Purpose

The purpose of this module is to provide a Bible study guide and application.

This module has been created to help the participant gain an insight into this first miracle of Jesus by blending biblical, theoretical, and philosophical tenets with practical application.

This on-line module has been designed to be flexible and easy to adapt to the participant's time and scheduling needs.

### Module Session Components

**Session Overview.** Provides a thumbnail outline of session contents.

**Learner Objectives.** Lists specific outcomes the participant should expect and experience.

**Introduction.** Orients participants to the material and prepares him or her for learning.

**Session Body.** Delivers the core message of the session.

**Application.**



# Wedding at Cana: Jesus' First Miracle

## Session Overview

Introduction to the Miracle  
Background  
The Event  
Application: Lessons the Miracle Teaches

## Learner Objectives

- At the end of this session, you should be able to:
- Understand that God is intimately involved in our everyday life.
  - There is abundant life in Jesus.
  - Believers are called to participate in Jesus' ministry through obedience to His calling.

## Introduction

John is the only gospel writer who records this first "sign." He, as do the other writers, shows that these miracles are not just superhuman events. They are demonstrations of God nature, power, and His great compassion and recognition of our needs. The importance of this first and subsequent miracles is that Jesus "revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him" (John 2:11).



## Wedding at Cana: Jesus' First Miracle

## Notes

At the beginning of a study of John's Gospel, one of the first observations we make is John's creativity in story telling. He doesn't just tell stories for their historical or cultural meaning; he always leaves the reader to discover other, higher, deeper meanings beyond his words.

There are seven miracles recorded in John's Gospel. John called them "signs" or "evidences." Signs or evidences of what? The answer can be found in John 20:30, 31.

"Jesus' disciples saw Him do many other miracles besides the ones told about in this book, but these are recorded so that you will believe that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing in Him you will have Life" (NLT).

At the close of the story of the first miracle in his Gospel, John concluded,

"This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was Jesus' first display of his glory. And his disciples believed in him." (2:12)

Here are the seven miracles recorded in the fourth Gospel:

- The First Sign: Turning Water into Wine (2:1-11)
- The Second Sign: Healing of the Nobleman's Son (4:43-54)
- The Third Sign: Healing of the Paralyzed Man (5:1-9)
- The Fourth Sign: Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:1-5)
- The Fifth Sign: Jesus Walking on the Water (6:16-25)
- The Sixth Sign: Healing of the Blind Man (9:1-41)
- The Seventh Sign: Raising of Lazarus from the Dead (11:1-44)

Only one of the miracles in John's Gospel, the Feeding of the Five Thousand, is listed in all four Gospels. We don't know why the other Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) failed to write about any of the six other miracles John included in his Gospel. Perhaps that is a question that will be answered in heaven someday. Now let's turn to the First Miracle, the Wedding Feast at Cana. It begins in Chapter 2 of John.

### Background

If your vote had counted for anything, you probably would *not* have voted for Cana as the location of the first miracle. That is not meant to be a slam against the town. It's just that there were other towns and cities in Israel that were more interesting—given that Jesus' first miracle would be performed



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there. Jerusalem would have been the popular choice. Nazareth would have been the sentimental choice—Jesus' home town. Bethlehem was probably the theologically-correct choice—it was Jesus' birthplace as well as the birthplace of David the King. If the plan was for Jesus to hit a home run in his first miracle, Cana would probably not be the place where he launched his ministry of miracles. But that's from a human perspective. From God's point of view, it was the perfect place.

There were four villages named Cana (Kana) in New Testament times (three in Israel, one in Lebanon). Depending on which biblical archeologist you accept as being most accurate, Cana in Galilee was probably the place. It was located about four miles northeast of Nazareth. Today only ruins remain of this biblical site. One source states that the only way you can reach the ruins of this Cana today is if you travel by SUV or other off-road vehicles.

John begins the story by saying that Mary, Jesus' mother, was a guest at the wedding, and that Jesus and his disciples were invited too. We don't know how many disciples attended, but in Chapter 1 John indicates that four had been selected—Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. Matthew and Mark record the calling of Andrew and his brother Simon and James and his brother John—all on the same day. They were fishermen and were mending their nets when Jesus approached them. If only Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathanael attended the wedding with Jesus, it may be assumed that John was not present at the feast, while the four were. John would have written this story from reports given by others, not his personal observation. After this miracle, the disciples were mentioned mostly as "the twelve" or simply "the disciples." These titles would distinguish them from Jesus' other followers.

Weddings of Jewish couples were times of major celebration in a village, often extending over several days or a week to allow all the invited relatives and guests to attend. The celebrations were held between Sabbaths and always featured an elaborate dinner. A village like Cana would not have had a public meeting hall, so families invited dinner guests to a home for the celebration. Following the evening meal the wedding would occur. In subsequent evenings a dinner and a repeat of the wedding vows would be held, with new guests invited.

### The Event

Jesus and his mother—plus Jesus' disciples—were invited to the celebration. Some scholars suggest that Mary was kin to the groom, which would explain why she intervened to solve the problem of the wine supply running out. She told Jesus about the situation and then instructed the servants to follow His directions. And they did. Try to picture this. Most



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homes did not have a privately-owned well from which to draw water. Water was scarce and small towns built cisterns to hold whatever water that was saved from the infrequent rains. If there was a common well, it probably would have been situated near the center of the village, so everyone would have access to it. Some of the wealthier families had large containers (jars) positioned near the porch, and in this particular story the hired servants would have already drawn water from the nearest well and have it available for ceremonial purposes that would have preceded the dinner. John tells us that this home had six large jars, holding up to 30 gallons of water each, or between 120 and 180 gallons when full.

When Jesus was asked by his mother to intervene, He seemed reluctant at first saying, "Woman, my time has not yet come." However, He quickly proceeded to instruct the servants to fill all six jars to the brim with water. It must have taken the servants a fair amount of time to draw water from the well and fill the jars. Even if the jars had been half empty, it would have required hauling in as much as 60 to 90 gallons to fill the jars. When the task was done, Jesus instructed the servants to draw out some and present it to the master of the feast.

One can only imagine the shock among the servants when they heard this instruction. "He wants us to do what? Pretend that this water we just poured in these jars is actually wine?" But they didn't utter a word as to where the wine had come from or who made it happen. When the master of the feast tasted the wine, he was astonished with its quality and proceeded to speak to the bridegroom; he didn't have a clue how much of it was now available. He said to the groom, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first, and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink, but you have saved the best till now" (v. 10).

The water was miraculously turned into wine, and the parents of the bride and groom were saved from the embarrassment of not having enough wine to complete the dinner. That's the story. Now let's consider its deeper meanings, particularly what the miracle teaches us about Jesus, the Son of God.

### Application

#### Lessons the Miracle Teaches

1. *The miracle shows us that Jesus was touched by the commonplace events of life. Do you remember the parables Jesus told? They were about everyday people and everyday events that He turned into spiritual lessons. In Luke's Gospel he told the parables of a lost coin, a lost Sheep, and a lost son. Now here in John's Gospel is the story about Jesus attending a wedding feast and saving the hosts from embarrassment.*



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Jesus was on a Divine mission and He needed to complete that mission within in a limited time-frame. Every event in His life was measured. We know now that He only had three years to complete it. He had just begun gathering the men who would be His disciples. There was work to do, followers to be trained, places to go, but he took the time to attend a wedding! And it is suggested that He engaged in the events of the evening as a participant, not as a spectator. He is like that today with us. He is interested in the commonplace things that happen to us—both good and bad. I believe that what concerns us, concerns Him. He is aware of our daily problems and wants to engage with us in resolving them. He took time to attend a wedding. He will take time to listen to our heart's cries.

- The miracle shows us that when Jesus transforms something (or someone), He does so completely and abundantly.* At the wedding feast, the bridegroom and his parents were about to be embarrassed. The wine supply was exhausted. There probably was no central supplier where wine could be purchased that late in the evening. The dinner was almost over, and all that was needed was a pitcher or two to top off everyone's cups. Jesus went far beyond that! He produced somewhere between 120 and 180 gallons of it! There is no way the wedding guests could have consumed that much wine in one evening. One Jewish scholar estimated that 180 gallons of wine was a year's supply in the average Jewish home. In John 10:10 Jesus said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (KJV). Jesus didn't produce a little bit of wine to finish a dinner; He went way beyond what was needed. He does that when He transforms individuals from being lost sinners to people on their way to becoming saints. Jesus likes abundance!
- The miracle shows us that Jesus uses humans to produce miraculous results.* In this event Jesus worked the miracle through the most humble of servants. He could have insisted that those who participated in the miracle be leaders in the Synagogue. He could have told everyone to stand back and not come into contact with the six jars. He could have laid his hands on the jars, one at a time, to demonstrate that what was about to happen was from God. He could have spoken a prayer that others after Him might have tried to use to replicate the miracle later. None of this happened. Many years ago I found this poem by an unknown author:

*Who flies the kite? I, said the wind; it is my whim. I fly the kite.  
Who flies the kite? I, said the boy; it is my joy. I fly the kite.  
Who flies the kite? I, said the string; I am the thing that flies the kite.*





*Who flies the kite? I, said the tail; I make it sail. I fly the kite.  
Who flies the kite? All are wrong; all are right. All fly the kite.*

Jesus doesn't preach in any pulpits today, or teach children in the ways of God. He depends on people like you and me to help produce life-changing results in others. He doesn't build church structures, but He still calls them His Church—the One against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. He doesn't serve as a missionary on a foreign field. He calls us to do that. He doesn't write books. We do that. We all "fly the kite."

4. *The miracle shows us the quality of life our efforts should produce.* Jesus does not endorse mediocrity in ministry. He isn't glorified with work poorly done. The life of holiness is not measured by comparing it with standards of other churches or ministries. He wants our efforts to be the very best. When the servants delivered the wine to the master of ceremonies, he did not know how much of it was in the jars out back. The amount of the wine was nothing compared to the quality of it. Hear again what the master of the feast said to the bridegroom: "This is wonderful stuff! You're different than most! Usually a host uses the best wine first, and afterwards, when everyone is full and doesn't care, then he brings out the less expensive brands. But you have kept the best for last." I love these words from Gloria Gaither:

*The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows,  
The more that I love Him, more love He bestows,  
Each day is like heaven, my heart overflows,  
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.*

And finally, in verse 11 John wrote, "This miracle at Cana in Galilee was Jesus' first public demonstration of His heaven-sent power. And His disciples believed that He really was the Messiah." That is still His plan today—making, nurturing, and equipping new disciples . . . through us.

## Notes