

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“THE WEDDING AND THE WINE”

For individual study or group discussion

In John 2:1–12, a wedding feast defined by food, wine, joy, and community, becomes the setting for Jesus' first miracle. At Cana, Jesus turns water into wine, performing the first of many signs that fulfill his promise to Nathanael in John 1:50: “*You will see greater things than these.*” The account of **the wedding and the wine** serves as a foretaste of the greater banquet to come, where heaven and earth meet in Christ (cf. Isaiah 25:6–8).

Through Jesus' first sign, we learn of a true emptiness exposed. (vv. 1–5)

In Scripture, wine symbolizes God's abundance, yet here in John's Gospel the wine has run out. First century Jewish weddings could last for weeks, and it was the groom's responsibility to provide the wine. According to D.A. Carson, “*to run out of supplies would be a dreadful embarrassment in a ‘shame’ culture; there is some evidence it could also lay the groom open to a lawsuit from aggrieved relatives of the bride.*”¹ The tension is palpable. Mary informs Jesus. Surprisingly, he seems dismissive. Yet Mary trusts completely, urging the servants to do whatever he tells them.

- The narrative begins with the words, “*On the third day.*” Read Genesis 1:11–13 and Luke 24:7. How do these hyperlinks help you better understand its significance within the story?
- Read John 4:46–54. In another story set in Cana, a royal official also seems to be snubbed by Jesus. Like Mary, he takes no offense, but his faith, on the contrary, is increased. What might John be teaching about the true nature of faith with these two Cana encounters?

Through Jesus' first sign, we learn of a better provision given. (vv. 6–10)

Acting with discretion, Jesus calls for six stone jars to be filled with water. The jars are meant for purification, part of the old rituals of cleansing. But as the water is transformed into excellent wine, the jars point to a new covenant of joy. According to Doug Ponder, the water of the law becomes the wine of grace: “*Enter Jesus, the Lord of the feast, the Master of the ceremony, the Vine and the Vintner. Notice how he does not follow the ways of the world, watering down the gifts of God as if to say that grace was scarce. No, our Lord makes the very best wine (v. 10). Behold the fortified wine of grace, available to everyone who thirsts, without money or price (Isaiah 55:1–2).*”²

- What does the sign of turning water to wine reveal about Jesus' character, identity, and mission? (cf. Matt. 14:13–21; Col. 1:16–17; John 10:10)
- How is it significant that Jesus chose to turn the Jewish water of purification into wine for a wedding feast? (cf. Ex. 30:17–21; Jn. 19:34; Heb. 9:13–14)

Through Jesus' first sign, we learn of a greater fulfillment anticipated. (vv. 11–12)

The wedding at Cana anticipates the final wedding feast, where the true Bridegroom will drink the fruit of the vine anew with his people in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 26:29). In her book, *The Spirituality of Wine*, author Gisela Kreglinger summarizes: “*The vision of the prophet Isaiah that God will swallow up death, wipe away the tears from all faces, and remove the disgrace of his people and instead provide a feast of rich food and well-aged wine has begun in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The OT prophets instilled in God's people a longing for a future redemption, where the harmonious times of Eden, the garden of delight, will be restored. Wine will flow in great abundance. When Christ transformed the water into a great abundance of wine at the wedding of Cana, he provided a powerful sign that in him these promises of old have come to be fulfilled.*”³

- Read Isaiah 25:6–8 and Revelation 21:1–7. How does the image of a wedding feast help you understand what's in store for God's people?

DATE: January 25, 2026

SPEAKER: Wil/Chad

SERIES: The Gospel of John

PASSAGE: John 2:1–12

Family Dinner Table

Signs

John opens his Gospel by inviting us to see Jesus' works not as random miracles, but as signs (2:11) that heaven is opening (1:51), and God is making his dwelling place with his people (Rev. 21:3). The first of these signs unfolds at a wedding in Cana, where water meant for purification becomes wine overflowing with joy. On the surface, it is a quiet act of compassion. Yet beneath, it signifies something far greater: God's Kingdom is arriving in Christ, who restores the world with divine abundance. It is this deeper meaning behind the sign that theologian N. T. Wright helps us to see more clearly when he writes: “*John is setting up a series of signposts to take us through his story. The signs are all occasions when Jesus did what he'd just promised Nathanael that he would do. They are moments when the angels of God are going up and coming down at the place where Jesus is. They are moments when heaven is opened, when the transforming power of God's love bursts in to the present world. The whole point of the ‘signs’ is that they are moments when heaven and earth intersect with each other. We should be in no doubt that what John so badly wants to tell us is that with these events, the life of heaven came down to earth. That's why one of the motto texts for the whole gospel is ‘The Word became flesh’ (1:14).*”⁴

- The wine at Cana is not only abundant but the best. What does this tell us about the nature of God's Kingdom and the kind of restoration Jesus brings? (cf. John 10:10; Psalm 23:5–6)

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RUF at UTC, denominational partner ministry

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

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¹ Carson, D.A. *The Gospel According to John*. 1991, Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 169

² Ponder, Doug. *Why Did Jesus Turn Water into Wine?* December 2018. *Tabletalk Magazine*. <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/why-did-jesus-turn-water-into-wine/>

³ Kreglinger, Gisela H. *The Spirituality of Wine*. 2016 Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 219–20

⁴ Wright, N.T. *John for Everyone: Part One*. 2002, London. John Knox Press. 21