

SEQUENCE 2

WATER REPLACED BY WINE AT CANA

Sequence 2
2:1-12

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CHIASTIC STRUCTURE FOR SEQUENCE 2

- (a) **Jesus, His mother and His disciples at Cana** (2:1-2).
- (b) **Wine and servants** (2:3-5).
- (c) Water changed to wine (2:6-8).
- (b') **Wine and servants** (2:9-10).
- (a') **Jesus, His mother and His disciples at Cana** (2:11-12).

Jesus' public ministry now begins and extends from 2:1 to 12:50. These eleven chapters are often called the "book of signs"; in them, Jesus *reveals* His glory (cf. 1:14). The remaining chapters of this Gospel are often labelled "the book of glory." Here Jesus is glorified by God, *i.e.* He receives glory. There is some usefulness to this breakdown, but caution must be exercised (see remarks on the structure of the Fourth Gospel in the Preface, p. vii).

This first miracle of Jesus which is only recorded here among the Gospels, is not the simple miracle story it seems to be at first reading. There are any number of tantalizing details in the story which suggest depths of symbolic meaning not immediately evident to the eye: (1) the specific reference to the "third day" in verse 1; (2) Mary's provocative statement, "They have no wine" in verse 3; (3) the seeming rebuke of Mary in verse 4 and Jesus' mysterious reply, "My hour has not yet come"; (4) the reference to the stone jars being for *Jewish* purification rites in verse 6; (5)

the unusual word for drawing off the water-made-wine in verse 8; (6) the abundance of the water changed to wine (120-180 gallons); (7) the steward's apparently joking remark about how wine is to be served at a banquet; (8) the observation that in this "sign" Jesus "manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him" in verse 11; and (9) the remarkable parallels with the story of Mary at the tomb in John 20:1-18 (Sequence 20).

The Jewish background is prominent in John's Gospel and must be understood in the light of the Old Testament--the setting in Galilee, the typical Jewish wedding feast, the explicit reference to Jewish purification. In the Old Testament there is a rich symbolism of wine which will transpire during the "last days" when the Messiah will appear. It is associated also with joy and seen to be a sign of God's rich blessing (Gen. 27:28). The Messianic age is seen as one flowing with new wine in great abundance (Gen. 49:8-12; Hos. 14:7; Jer. 31:12; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13f.). On the other hand, the cup of wine appears as a metaphor for suffering and death (Ps. 60:3; 75:8; cf. Mark 10:38f.). Building on such imagery, one can argue that Jesus changing the water into wine is symbolic of the inauguration of the Messianic age. Certainly Jesus' parable of the new wine in old skins comes into view as one notes the juxtaposition of this story with cleansing of the Temple. John gives a hint of such himself in noting that it is the contents of the old Jewish pots for purification that are transformed. Christ is the one who takes the outworn forms of stagnant religion and replaces them with the true worship in Spirit and in Truth.

It is probable that any narrative of Christ involving wine would have had eucharistic overtones for the early Christians, not so much the eucharist itself but the death of Christ which the wine symbolized. That seems to be the case in this Sequence. It is likely the basis of Jesus' strange rebuke to His mother, "my hour has not yet come" (v. 4). In John, the supreme "hour" of Jesus is His hour of atoning death (of which the entire Old Testament proclaims under the rubric of redemption), the hour of His glorification in being lifted up on the cross. Mary will disappear from the Johannine narrative, only to reappear in the corresponding Sequence 20 at the foot of the cross to participate in that critical "hour." It is the moment of Jesus' greatest glorification, and in some sense John sees that "glory" manifest already in this, His first miracle (v. 11).

Some further thoughts to ponder is that all the miracles in the Fourth Gospel have the overarching theme of Jesus overcoming the great threats to life, whether it be the threat of failing health, or death, or violence in nature (as it is in Genesis--the theme of threat to life being resolved by the power of God). In this Sequence, Jesus overcomes an economic threat. The setting is that of a Palestinian peasant farmer

at the wedding of his daughter, one of the high social obligations of his life. He runs out of wine at the reception, a near disaster in which he stands to lose face completely with all his neighbors, and in those days, could be sued by the bride's parents. Jesus overcomes this threat, furnishing not only wine, but the best wine in abundance, both saving the man's reputation and allowing the celebration to continue. Thus Jesus is concerned with the celebration of *life*--a key word in the Prologue (1:4 which is chiasmatically paralleled with v. 16: "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace"). As John will point out later, Jesus is concerned not only with the future but with true life *now*, with abundant living in joyful relationship with the Father (cf. John 10:10).

At first glance, the next Sequence (Sequence 3--the center of John's chiastic structure for Part 1), the cleansing of the Temple seems wholly unrelated to the miracle which precedes it. Nothing could be further from the truth. In actuality, there is a close relationship. The cleansing provides a context for understanding the miracle of changing the water into wine at Cana. Jesus brings the new Gospel, the new life. He accomplishes what was impossible for the old religion of the Temple. The Jewish faith under the Old Covenant which was enacted by Moses, with its provisions for external purification, with its external cultus so prone to abuse, is superseded by the Messiah Himself, which is found in Jesus alone.

The cleansing scene is part of the passion narrative in the Synoptics. In John, however, it appears at the beginning of Jesus' ministry because John's passion emphasis runs throughout his Gospel and is precisely introduced here in order to balance Sequence 19 in chapters 18-19. Jesus' passion has already been anticipated in chapter 1 when John refers to Jesus as the "lamb of God," and now in Sequence 2 with the comment to Mary about His "hour." And, the passion is the central theme of the cleansing account. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it" Jesus declares (2:19).

If all of this seems too strange to our western way of thinking, then we should consider the three controlling factors to our interpretation of this Sequence, as well as all those which follow. First, this is the first of the signs John relates, and John himself insists that his purpose in recording these signs was to convince people that the Christ, the Son of God, is Jesus (cf. 20:30-31). We shall not go far wrong in our understanding of these verses if we seek to discover how they breed faith in Jesus. Second, the fact that various theological themes are richly present should have little or no bearing on the value of the narrative as history. We have long eclipsed the day when we may allow ourselves to think so narrowly that the only account that has any pretension of being of historical value is the one where the writer is theologically disinterested in what he is writing. Third, the obvious background is the Old

Testament itself, mediated through first-century Judaism, if we may judge by the multiplication of relevant allusions in this Sequence alone! As we progress through this Sequence, as well as all the others, we will come to understand that what we have before us is a consciously created composition.

TEXT (2:1-12)

(a) (2:1) And on the third **day** there was a wedding **in Cana of Galilee**, and the **mother** of **Jesus** was there; (2) and **Jesus** also was invited, and His **disciples**, to the wedding.

(b) (3) And when the **wine** gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no **wine**." (4) And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come." (5) His mother said to the **servants**, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

(c) (6) Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. (7) Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. (8) And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the headwaiter." And they took it to him.

(b') (9) And when the headwaiter tasted the water which had become **wine**, and did not know where it came from (but the **servants** who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, (10) and said to him, "Every man serves the good **wine** first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; you have kept the good **wine** until now."

(a') This beginning of His signs **Jesus did in Cana of Galilee**, and manifested His glory, and His **disciples** believed in Him. (12) After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His **mother**, and His brothers, and His **disciples**; and there they stayed a few **days**.

Analysis of the Chiastic Structure

In Sequence 2, John creates the simplest possible parallels. In (a) and (a'), he parallels the words "Jesus," "mother," "disciples," and "Cana in Galilee." In (b) and (b'), he parallels the words "wine" and "servants." The center (c) deals with the

actual miracle of changing of the water into wine.

Commentary

The miracle which Jesus performs in Cana is His first recorded miracle. This particular miracle signifies that there is a transforming power associated with Jesus. While this "sign" is recorded only in this Gospel, it should not be overlooked that there are partial parallels in the Synoptics. Thus the imagery of the wedding feast is used with reference to the kingdom of God (Mt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Lk. 12:36), and the disciples in the presence of Christ are likened to wedding guests rejoicing with the bridegroom (Mk. 2:19). Again, the contrast of Jesus' message with Judaism is illustrated by the wine and the wineskins (Lk. 5:37ff.).

Sequence 2
2:1-12

(A) Jesus, His mother, and His disciples at Cana (2:1-2)

2:1 The third day. Does this mean simply the third day after Philip's and Nathanael's call (1:43), or is there something more to it? First, the simplest explanation is that the three days allow time for Jesus and His disciples to move from where John the Baptist was baptizing to Cana in Galilee.

It is interesting that this expression occurs only here in this Gospel. It may be John's faint foreshadowing of the resurrection. Early Christians would immediately think of the resurrection when confronted with remarks about Jesus and the "third day." In 2:19, Jesus will say, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." In Luke 24:21, the Emmaus disciples remark, "... and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened." The reference in John 20:1 to the first day of the week (the third after Jesus' death), in addition to other parallels in 20:1-18 with 2:1-12 (*e.g.*, recurrence of the title "woman" and recurrence of the same persons in both sequences: Mary, Jesus, the disciples, and the brothers), would lend some support for this interpretation.

More impressive is the running sequence of days from 1:19 on, climaxing in the miraculous transformation of water into wine. These seven days can be accounted for in the following manner. Beginning on the day a delegation is sent to interrogate the Baptist (1:19-28), the second day finds the Baptist announcing Jesus as the Lamb of God (1:29), the third day brings two disciples to Jesus' residence (1:35-42), and

the fourth day witnesses the incident with Nathanael. The wedding of 2:1-12 takes place "the third day" after that, which, by inclusive reckoning, means two days later. This total of six days does not seem very significant. In fact, however, another day should be added (which is overlooked by almost all commentators). This is achieved, not by appealing to the textual variant (in the Greek text) at 1:41, but by observing that when the Baptist's two disciples attach themselves to Jesus it is already 4:00 PM. on the third day--and they spent the rest of that day with Him (1:39--and thus we see the significance of that added detail that the Evangelist places in the text: "for it was about the tenth hour"). That means Andrew's introduction of Simon Peter to Jesus takes place on the *next* day, the fourth; the Nathanael exchange occurs on the fifth; the changing of the water into wine on the seventh!

This analysis is not grasping at straws. Only here does John provide a careful record of a sequence of days. This may of course reflect eyewitness participation, which in turn supports the hypothesis that John himself is the unnamed disciple with Andrew who heard the Baptist's witness (cf. notes on 1:35). Even so, for a writer as subtle as John to set out a week of activity, culminating in the miracle of new wine on the seventh day, may reflect more than antiquarian precision. John has already drawn attention to creation in the Prologue. The week of days climaxing in the miracle at Cana may provide an echo of creation-week (cf. Genesis 1). That means the miracle itself takes place on the seventh day, the Sabbath. Jesus' performance of redemptive work on the Sabbath is later in this Gospel (5:16ff.; 7:21-24; 9:16) given the most suggestive theological treatment in the New Testament, apart from Hebrews 4. Although we cannot be absolute certain that the seven days in 1:19--2:1 were intended to carry this weight, it seems likely, but only if we assume the Evangelist's readers are familiar with the Scriptures (our Old Testament), and are expected to read this Gospel, meditatively, more than once.

As mentioned before, John 1:19--2:11 is a thought unit organized into a scheme of seven days (1:19-27, 29-34, 35-38, 39, 40-42, 43-51; 2:1-11). Even a cursory reading lays bare the care with which each component of these two sequences (Sequence 1: 1:19-51; Sequence 2: 2:1-11) has been skillfully crafted.

We will first draft a few notes concerning these seven days, then chart perhaps the significance of these seven days culminating in Jesus' miracle of changing the water into wine and the deep Messianic overtones which this would conjure in the minds of John's Jewish readers.

Day One (1:19-27) is composed of two units (vv. 19-23 and vv. 24-27) that are loosely parallel to one another in normal order (non-chiastic):

Unit One (vv. 19-23)

1. Jews sent . . . from Jerusalem to ask him (v. 19).
2. I am not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet (vv. 20-21).
3. He said, "I am" (v. 23).

Unit Two (vv. 24-27)

1. They had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him (vv. 24-25a).
2. If you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet (v. 25b).
3. John answered them, "I baptize with water; but . . . He who comes after me" (vv. 26-27).

John the Baptist is here center stage and intent on clarifying his role by first stating what he is not (the Christ: 7:41-42; Elijah: Mal. 4:5-6; the prophet: Deut. 18:15; Jn. 6:14; 7:52), and what he is (the voice of one crying in the wilderness). The focus is on the question: why is John baptizing? The Jewish interrogators (sent by the Jews, v. 19 = Pharisees, v. 24, *i.e.*, the ever-watchful and suspicious religious leaders who keep the people under surveillance: 4:1; 7:32, 47; 9:13, 18, 22; 11:46; 12:19, 42) assume he baptizes because he is an eschatological figure, either the Messiah or a preparer for the Messiah. John says he is indeed a preparer figure, but the one mentioned in Isaiah 40:3 (cf. 1:6-8; 5:35).

NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION OF THE OLD

Almost all the New Testament writers quote frequently from the Old Testament, and such quotations inevitably involve interpretation of the significance of Old Testament texts. But there are several characteristics which the New Testament authors exemplified when quoting the Old Testament:

- * The New Testament authors have the same basic orientation to the Old Testament, recognizing that the significance of the gospel events is seen clearly only in the light of the Old Testament;
- * The New Testament authors recognized in the Old Testament a witness which corroborates their own;
- * The New Testament authors claim the Old Testament to be an advance witness, a promise which shows the theological significance of events within the history of salvation prior to their occurrence.

Day Two ("the next day," vv. 29-34) is composed of two units again, however this time are loosely parallel to one another in chiasmic form:

Unit One (vv. 29-32)

A Two confessions of John:

- (1) "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (v. 29).
- (2) "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me'" (v. 30; cf. 1:15).

B "And I did not recognize Him" (v. 31a).

"I came baptizing in water" (v. 31b-c).

"I have beheld the Spirit descending . . . He remained upon Him" (v. 32).

Unit Two (vv. 33-34)

B' "And I did not recognize Him" (v. 33a).

"He who sent me to baptize in water" (v. 33b)

"He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him"
(v. 33c).

A' Two confessions of John:

(a) "this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit" (v. 33d).

(b) "this is the Son of God" (v. 34).

Day Two (vv. 29-34) is linked to Day One (vv. 19-27) not only by the seven day scheme but also by link phrases: "the one who comes after me," v. 27//v. 30; "I baptize," v. 26//vv. 31, 33. On Day Two, John the Baptist points to Jesus. A variety of titles and functions are attributed to Jesus in this brief section.

Day Two answers the question of Day One (Why does John baptize?): John baptizes with water so that the Baptizer with the Spirit may be revealed to Israel (vv. 31, 33). In the Fourth Gospel the baptismal activity of John is the means by which the Baptist comes to a recognition who Jesus is.

Day Three ("the next day," 1:35-39) is composed of an exchange of disciples from John to Jesus (cf. 3:30: "He must increase, but I must decrease").

John's words of testimony, "Behold the Lamb of God" (vv. 35-36).

The disciples' response: they followed Jesus (v. 37).

Jesus' question, "What do you seek?" (v. 38a).

The disciples' response: "Where are you staying?" (v. 38b).

Jesus' invitation, "Come and see" (v. 39a).

The disciples' response: they abode with Him that day (v. 39b).

Day Three is linked to Day Two not only by the seven day scheme but also by the link phrase, "Lamb of God" (vv. 29, 36). John, who has been center stage on Days One and Two, now passes offstage and is replaced by Jesus, who attracts disciples to Himself.

Day Four ("they stayed with Him that day," v. 39, signals the close of the previous day, making the textual variant in v. 41, "early in the morning," found in the Old Latin and Old Syriac, unnecessary, 1:40-42) consists of one disciple's bringing another to Jesus. One who followed Him was Andrew (v. 40).

Again, Day Four is related to Day Three not only by the seven day scheme, but also by the link word "followed" (vv. 37, 40). Jesus here is center stage, drawing disciples to Himself and giving them a new identity (v. 42b: a change of name signals a new identity; cf. Gen. 32:27-28).

Day Five ("the next day," 1:43-51) is, like Day Four, a unit consisting of one disciple's bringing another to Jesus. Day Five is related to Day Four not only by the seven day scheme but also by the link word "found" (vv. 41, 45) and the use of prophecy related to new disciples (vv. 42b, 47, 51).

Day Five also has Jesus making a prophecy about Himself to the disciples as a group (v. 51) that will be soon fulfilled in 2:1-11: "You [plural] will see the heaven standing open (cf. Acts 10:11; Rev. 4:1; 19:11) and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." The clear meaning is that Jesus is the locus of revelation, the place where the vision of God is given. If Nathanael confesses faith in Jesus on the basis of Jesus' knowledge of him, how much more will they all believe on the basis of their knowledge of God through Jesus!

Day Seven ("on the third day," by the inclusive method of reckoning then current, brings us to day 7; 2:1-12) is composed of a miracle which indicates that the Messianic Age has been inaugurated: the miracle of changing water into wine. The miracle of 2:1-12 functions as the fulfillment of the prophecy of 1:51 (cf. 2:11).

In conclusion, a reading of 1:19--2:12 reveals that the whole is tied together with the same care with which the individual units are composed (via chiastic structure).

On the opposite page a chart contains the "7000 Years of History Based Upon the Seven Day Creation Week." For the most part, this chart represents what rabbis believed hundreds of years before the Messiah came. Of course the cross and the New Testament passages have been superimposed by me. They believed in two distinct ages: "the present age" and "the coming age." The former was divided into three ages, the first two thousand years as the "age of desolation" (TOHU; events ranging from creation and the Garden of Eden to the destruction of the Tower of Babel), the next two thousand years as the "age of instruction" (TORAH; events ranging from the call of Abram to the revelation of the Messiah), and lastly, the "age of the Messiah" (literally, "the coming one," Gen. 49:10; Ezk. 21:24-24-27; events including the glorification of the Messiah to His subjection of the nations).

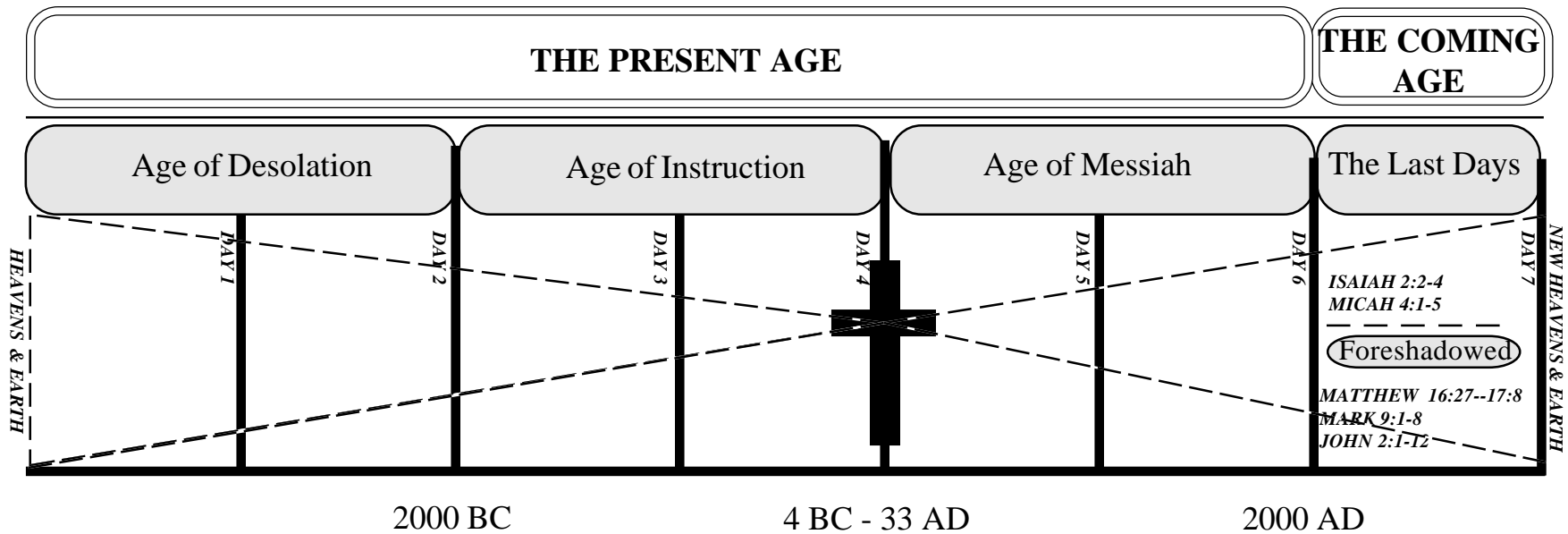
The "present age" is to be followed by "the coming age" or as prophetically spoken, "the Last Days." The rabbis noticed centuries ago that the Creation account as recorded in Genesis 1:1--2:3 establishes the pattern of "and there was evening and there was morning, the ? day" for the first six days (1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), whereas the seventh day--the day the LORD God "blessed and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Gen. 2:3)--breaks the pattern and there is not the usual "and there was evening and there was morning, the ? day"! Therefore, the rabbis concluded that Day 7 inaugurated eternity because there was no more night or day. And this is exactly what we find in Revelation 21:1-22:5, especially 22:5).

This rabbinic tradition is very old and predates the coming of Messiah Jesus by centuries and has proponents as the distinctive church fathers Polycarp (disciple of the apostle John), and Martin Luther.

Of course this rabbinic tradition of basing the length of history upon the seven day creation week as recorded in Genesis 1 is conjecture. However, we must acknowledge that this was a well known interpretation, and one that was certainly concurrent with the apostolic teaching in the first century AD. Peter's remark in his Second Epistle that "with the LORD one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8) may find its basis in this theory of biblical eschatology.

In addition, is it coincidental that wherever in the Gospels where specific amount of days are recorded (*i.e.*, Mt. 17:1//Mk. 9:2: "and six days later" = on the

7000 YEARS OF HISTORY BASED UPON THE SEVEN DAY CREATION WEEK



"Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the **beginning of creation.**' For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. **But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the LORD one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.** . . . looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" 2 Peter 3:3-13

seventh day) or a sequence of days totaling to seven (Jn. 1:19--2:12), or even a reference to things happening on the Sabbath Day itself (Mk. 2:23-28; Jn. 9:1-41, especially 9:16; etc.) we find Messiah Jesus displaying His glory and performing miracles which are both congruent and prophesied as occurring in "the Last Days"? (Isa. 2:2-4; 61:1-3; Micah 4:1-5).

Interestingly enough, all the Gospels begin their works with references to the creation story: Matthew, with his words "The book of the *genealogy* of Jesus Christ . . ." (Mt. 1:1); Mark, with his remark that Jesus "was with the wild beasts," presumably like the first Adam in the Garden of Eden (Mk. 1:13); Luke with his genealogy of Jesus going back to Adam (Lk. 3:23-38). John himself begins his Prologue with the words "In the beginning . . ." and refers to Mary as the "woman" in 2:4 and 19:26 in a way that seems to reflect the "woman" of Genesis 3:15.

And finally, the ordinance of marriage was intrinsic to creation (Gen. 1--2); it does not seem far-fetched for modern marriage services to invoke the setting of this miracle as evidence for Jesus' approval of the institution, and that John places the miracle of changing of water into wine at a wedding feast, occurring on a Sabbath!

Our information about the details of Jewish marriage ceremonies in first century is far from complete. According to the Mishnah the wedding would take place on a Wednesday if the bride was a virgin and on a Thursday if she was a widow. The bridegroom and his friends made their way in procession to the bride's house. This was often done at night, when there could be a spectacular torchlight procession. It is probable that there was a religious ceremony, but we have no details. The feast was prolonged, and might last as long as a week.

Cana is mentioned in this passage, in 4:46; 21:2, and nowhere else in the New Testament. On each occasion it is qualified by "of Galilee." Evidently it was not a well known place. John does not disclose the identity of the couple, but the presence of the mother of Jesus (His mother is never named in this Gospel, perhaps to avoid confusing her with other women by the name of Mary), and the invitation extended to Jesus shows that friends of the family were involved.

(B) Wine and servants (2:3-5)

2:3 They have no wine. In the ancient Near East there was a strong element of reciprocity about weddings, and that, for example, it was possible to take legal action

in certain circumstances against a man who had failed to provide the appropriate wedding gift. This is quite foreign to our wedding customs and we are apt to overlook such possibilities. But it means that when the supply of wine failed more than social embarrassment was involved. The bridegroom and his family may well have become involved in a heavy pecuniary liability. Therefore, underlying the clause "they have no wine" might be a dreadful embarrassment in a "shame" culture.

It is not impossible that Mary had some responsibility for the organization of the catering: hence her attempt to deal with the shortage of wine.

2:4a Woman, what do I have to do with you? Jesus' enigmatic response invites comment on three points. (1) The form of address, "Woman," though thoroughly courteous, is not normally an endearing term, nor the form of address preferred by a son addressing a much-loved mother. When Jesus addresses Mary from the cross, He uses the same expression (19:26). (2) The question itself, "what do I have to do with you?", has generated a number of translations. The expression, common in semitic idiom (e.g., Jdg. 11:12; 2 Sam. 16:10), always distances the two parties, the speaker's tone overlaid with some degree of reproach (cf. the demons addressing Jesus, Mt. 8:29; Mk. 1:24; 5:7; Lk. 4:34; 8:28). The tone is not rude; it is certainly abrupt.

We must not avoid the conclusion that Jesus by rebuking His mother, however courteously, declares, at the beginning of His ministry, His utter freedom from any kind of human advice, agenda or manipulation. The meaning of Jesus' question may well be that no one, not even Jesus' mother, has any control over His purposeful advance to the "hour" of His destiny (cf. Jn. 10:17-18). He has embarked on His ministry, the purpose of His coming; His only lodestar is His heavenly Father's will (5:30; 8:29). This must have been extremely difficult for Mary. Now that He had entered into the purpose of His coming, everything, even family ties, had to be subordinated to His divine mission. It is a remarkable fact that everywhere Mary appears during the course of Jesus' ministry, Jesus is at pains to establish distance between them (Mt. 12:46-50). This is not callousness on Jesus' part: on the cross He makes provision for her future (19:25-27). But she, like every other person, must come to Him as the promised Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Neither she nor anyone else dare presume to approach Him on an "inside track"--a lesson Peter had to also learn (Mk. 8:31-33). For no one could this lesson have been more difficult than for Jesus' mother; perhaps that was part of the sword that would pierce her soul (Lk. 2:35).

(3) The reason Jesus gives for the distance He maintains between His mother and Himself must be viewed in the light of the cross.

2:4b My hour has not yet come. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' "hour" refer to the time of His passion, death, and resurrection (cf. 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; 12:12, 27; 13:1). Since the Father in union with Jesus has determined the "hour" of Jesus' death, the apparently negative answer does not mean that Jesus will do nothing, since He goes ahead and works the miracle, but makes it clear that flesh and blood cannot determine or control Jesus' work of redemption (cf. 10:17-18; 12:27). This answer fits well with Jesus' attitude toward His mother in Mark 3:33-35 and Luke 2:49.

It is interesting to note that when the cross is in immediate prospect Jesus says, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified" (12:23; cf. also 12:27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1; the same idea may be present in Mt. 26:18, 45; Mk. 14:41). If we are right in linking the present passage with the later ones Jesus is thinking of His Messianic function. At the threshold of His ministry He looks forward to its consummation.

But how could Jesus' response be a response to Mary? And what could the reader be expected to understand from so enigmatic a reference?

To answer the second question first, rhetoric would call this sort of reference an internal prolepsis, a reference to a theme that will be developed later or to an event that will occur later in the narrative. Such a device captures the reader's interest and asks questions: What does "hour" mean? When does this "hour" come? By whetting the reader's curiosity it encourages more thoughtful reading; moreover the Gospel becomes deeper and more complex when it is read the second, third and subsequent times. Anticipating the development of the theme, then, we note that the "hour" of Jesus' death, resurrection and exaltation to glory is in the first part of this Gospel constantly said to be "no yet," until the arrival of the Gentiles (12:20ff.!!--this is important in light of biblical eschatology). From that point on, with Jesus on the brink of substitutionary death, the "hour" is said to have arrived (13:1; 17:1).

This forces us back to the first question: How could Jesus' words have been a response to Mary? She is apparently asking that Jesus do something to remedy the shortage of wine; He replies that the hour of His death\exaltation has not yet come. The point of connection is probably threefold. First, although Mary probably laid out the need for wine in mundane terms, it is typical of Jesus to detect more symbolism in various utterances than the speaker envisages (cf. notes on "Misunderstanding and Double-Meaning Words," pp. 9-10). Mary wants the wedding to end

without embarrassment; Jesus, being the Messiah, knows that the prophets characterized the Messianic age as a time when wine would flow liberally and would be the "sign" of the inauguration of this age (Gen. 49:8-12; Jer. 31:5, 12; Hosea 2:24; 14:7; Amos 9:13-14; Joel 4:18; Isa. 29:17). And elsewhere He Himself adapts the wedding as a symbol for the consummation of the Messianic age (*e.g.* Mt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13). Thus, Jesus is entirely correct to say that the hour of great wine, the hour of His glorification, has not yet come!

Second, although the entire Gospel moves towards the cross, toward Jesus' glorification, it must not be thought that Jesus' ministry before the cross was irrelevant, or mere preparation. Rather, individual elements in that ministry *anticipated* the glorification of Jesus on the cross, in much the same way that Jesus' healing miracles in the Synoptic Gospels are said to anticipate the cross (cf. Mt. 8:16-17). That is why John reports, at the end of this first sign, that the disciples witnessed Jesus' *glory*, and believed on Him (2:11; cf. 11:4; 20:29-30). Of course they could not at this point witness Jesus' glory in all its brightness, for the constant theme of the Book is that before the cross Jesus was not yet glorified (*e.g.* 7:39); but already they glimpsed something of the glory still to be revealed.

Third, it is possible that the Evangelist sees a connection with 3:27-30, where Jesus, Jesus alone, is emphatically identified as the Messianic bridegroom. As such, He will supply all the "wine" that is needed for the Messianic banquet, but His hour has not yet come. As this story unfolds, He graciously makes good the deficiencies of the unknown bridegroom of John 2, in anticipation of the perfect way He Himself will fill the role of the Messianic bridegroom.

2:5 Whatever He says to you, do it. Despite Jesus' ambiguous reply, Mary clearly expects Him to do something about the situation. In saying this to the servants, Mary shakes off the gentle rebuke and exemplifies faith. Like the Canaanite woman who was rebuked for her presumptuous approach, but who persisted and was praised for her faith (Mt. 15:21-28), so Mary is rebuked for presuming on the family tie, yet displays faith that is perfectly content to leave the matter in Jesus' hands. This sort of pattern occurs elsewhere in John (4:47-50; 11:21-44). In short, in 2:3 Mary approaches Jesus as His mother, and is reproached; in 2:5, she responds as a believer, and her faith is honored. She still does not know what He would do; but she has committed the matter to Him, and trusts Him.

These two verses (2:4-5), as difficult as they are, help to shape this account of Jesus' first miracle, and ensure that the focus is on Jesus' glory (2:11), not Mary's, and on the disciples' faith (2:11), including Mary's (2:5).

(C) Water changed to wine (2:6-8)

2:6 Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. The pots together held, roughly, between one hundred twenty and one hundred eighty gallons. The six water jars were made of stone, because stone, being more impervious than earthenware, did not itself contract uncleanness. They were therefore the more suitable *for ceremonial washing*. In the context of a wedding feast, perhaps the ritual washing of certain utensils and of guests' hands is especially in view. Their purpose provides a clue to one of the meanings of the story: the water represents the old order of the Old Covenant, which Jesus was to replace with something better (cf. 1:16).

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 the miracle on the seventh day. This view may well be strained, for the miracle concerns the transformation of water, not the provision of an additional water jar.

2:7-8 Fill the waterpots with water. Emphasis is placed not so much on the miracle itself as the lavishness of Jesus' miraculous gift.

The usual interpretation of these verses is that Jesus, after telling the servants to fill up the six water jars, performed the miracle and then asked the servants to take some of the freshly made wine from the water jars to the "headwaiter." The sheer quantity of water turned into wine then becomes symbolic of the lavish provision of the new age. But a commentator, Westcott (p. 84) and one or two others have rightly insisted that the verb "draw" (v. 8) is commonly used for drawing water from a well (cf. 4:7, 15). In other words, the water turned into wine was freshly drawn from the well after the water jars had been filled. The word "now" (v. 8) might be taken to support this view. Up to this time the servants had drawn water to fill the vessels used for ceremonial washing; *now* they are to draw for the feast that symbolizes the messianic banquet. Filling jars with such large capacity *to the brim* then indicates that the time for ceremonial purification is completely fulfilled; the new order, symbolized by the wine, could not be drawn from jars so intimately connected with merely ceremonial purification. If John has not used the verb loosely (and there is no reason for thinking he has), this latter interpretation prevails.

The person the NIV calls *the master of the banquet*, to whom the servants bring

the wine, is probably a chief steward or head waiter, in charge and perhaps of the place where the banquet was held (lit. = "ruler of the table").

(B') Wine and servants (2:9-10)

2:9 And when the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom. The miracle is verified through the headwaiter and the reference to the servants who "knew" where the wine had come from. In John's Gospel, questions having to do with "origin," especially Jesus' origin (cf. 7:27f; 8:14; 9:29; 19:9), imply an answer that almost always has something to do with origin from God. In this case, the answer would be that the miracle has been brought about by God to manifest Jesus' glory.

2:10 Every man serves the good wine first . . . you have kept the good wine until now. John's point in this verse is simply that the wine Jesus provides is unqualifiedly superior, as must everything be that is tied to the new, Messianic age Jesus is introducing.

What appears to be a joking remark has a subtle Johannine double meaning. The good wine is the new Messianic age, which replaces the old, just as the wine replaced/superseded the water for purification in the stone jars. The "good wine" served last does not however invalidate the "poor wine"; it replaces it!

(A') Jesus, His mother, and His disciples at Cana (2:11-12)

2:11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. The relationships between sign, glory, and belief in 2:11 are very important, because the three are frequently associated in John's Gospel. It is no accident, therefore, that the climax of the story combines the three concepts.


The sign-miracle testifies to the union of Jesus and the Father, and therefore to Jesus' glory, which will be revealed fully only in the "hour" of His passion, death, and resurrection (cf. 12:23; 13:1; 17:24). Jesus' glory is His total union with the Father. The miracle manifests this union inasmuch as it testifies to Jesus' oneness with the Father in the working of the sign. The belief of the disciples is related to their ability to see, inchoatively at least, that such a miracle involves the union of Jesus with the

Father. It testifies, therefore, to the truth of Jesus' claims. The reference to the disciples recalls 2:2 and links the episode with 1:35-51 and especially with 1:51--the programmatic text for the remainder of the Gospel.

This was *the first of His miraculous signs*. The word for "first" can also mean primary: it is just possible that John is saying this *first* sign is also *primary*, because it points to the new age, the Messianic age, wherein grace and fulfillment that Jesus is inaugurating. It may also hint at the "new creation" theme.

By this first sign, Jesus revealed His glory, "the glory of the only-begotten God, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (1:14). His glory would be revealed in greatest measure in His cross, resurrection and exaltation, but every step along the course of His ministry was an adumbration of that glory. The glory was not visible to all who had seen the miracle; the glory cannot be identified with the miraculous display. The servants saw the sign, but not the glory; the disciples by faith perceived Jesus' glory behind the sign, and they put their faith in Him.

Some hold that John has a scheme of seven signs, culminating in the resurrection of Lazarus; others link the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water (Jn. 6:21-23--which we will see structurally that this is impossible) as one sign, making the seventh the resurrection of Jesus Himself. Because John does not specifically label all the miracles "signs," it is hard to be certain that John intended either outline. What is clear is that this first sign is linked with the summary statement of the purpose of the Book in 20:30-31. In both places, the disciples saw and believed (2:11; 20:29). The time would come when blessing would be pronounced on new generations of followers who could not possibly see these events, but who have nevertheless believed and seen something of the glory of the Son (20:29).



WHERE DOES THE STORY END?
Commentators as well as translators frequently end the Cana miracle with verse 11. The parallelism of verses 11-12 with verses 1-2, however, indicates conclusively that the Evangelist himself ended the story at verse 12. Notice how the NASB has a paragraph marker at both verses 12 and 13.

2:12 mother . . . brothers . . . disciples. Beginning with verse 11, John brings the account to a close by an inclusio, a literary device that envelops a section

by repeating something at the end of the section that has already been used at the beginning--in this instance, "Cana of Galilee" (2:1, 11) and "He [Jesus] and His mother . . . , and His disciples" (2:2, 12). Thus the reference to Jesus' mother, to His disciples, and to "a few days" hark back to the introduction (2:1-2), where the same

persons are mentioned, minus the brothers, and thus close the circle with a perfect inclusion-conclusion. The sudden appearance of Jesus' brothers is surprising, however. They will appear again in 7:3-8 and 20:17.


THEMES

Sequence 2 places a major emphasis on the theme of replacement. The wine, symbolizing the new age, replaces or supersedes the water of the old. The Messianic symbolism of the miracle becomes evident when the reader recalls that Messianic days are described in the Old Testament as the days of God's new nuptials with Israel (cf. Hosea 2:16-25; Isa. 54:4-8; 62:4-5; Mt. 22:1-14; Jn. 3:39; Rev. 19:7-9). And as already mentioned, abundance of wine is associated with Messianic days in Genesis 49:10-12; Amos 9:13-14; Hosea 14:7; Jer. 31:12.

In addition to the messianic symbolism, there is a possible wisdom symbolism. The motif of wisdom is suggested by a comparison with Proverbs 9:5, where wisdom prepares a banquet and invites people to eat of her bread and "drink of her wine," and with Job 28:12-20, where the question arises concerning the origin of wisdom. The remarks about the steward not knowing "where" the wine had come from (2:9-10) may reflect this motif (cf. 3:8, where the motif of origin arises again in relation to the wind blowing where it will).

All things considered, this Sequence emphasizes the replacement of Jewish institutions by a new economy inaugurated by the Messiah Himself. This theme will continue in the following Sequence, where Jesus speaks of His body replacing the Temple of Jerusalem (2:13-25); in Jesus' statement to the Samaritan woman concerning the hour when "neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father" (4:21); in the water that is superior to the water of Jacob's well (4:6-12); and in the bread that comes down from heaven and gives eternal life to those who believe (6:35-58).

It must be confessed that modern readers would not as readily appreciate John's symbolism as Messianic Jewish readers would have at the end of the first century. For them, in a context of polemic with the synagogue concerning the validity of Jesus' and Christianity's claims, every aspect of the story and its symbolic content would be scrutinized.



I never knew how important the OT was before I studied John!

Yeah! I thought since it was "old" I did not have to know it!

DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF

1. Anticipating next week's study on Sequence 3 (2:13-25), study the passage and determine its *a b c b' a'* chiastic structure. Hint: The center of the chiastic structure (c) is found in 2:18-21--the actual section where Jesus says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rise it up." Surprised?
2. Read the corresponding chiastic sequence for Sequence 3 (Sequence 19: chapters 18-19). What common words and themes can you harvest from these parallel passages?
3. What is the Old Testament messianic significance for Jesus to supersede the Temple in Jerusalem?
4. What is the theological relationship between Sequence 2 and Sequence 3?
5. Read again John 1:1--4:3 and see if there are themes which arise again and again in this section of the Gospel.