

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series – The Gospel of John (SB_JN2A_Turning Water Into Wine)

“Signs” in the Gospel of John

In John’s Gospel account, he mentions seven specific miracles performed by Jesus and he refers to them as “signs.” These “signs” represent only a sample of the miracles that Jesus performed, but John uses them as a means of organizing His Gospel in a manner so as to demonstrate a specific objective of Jesus’ ministry, i.e. proof that He was indeed the Son of God having come in human form. Before, during and after Jesus’ public ministry, there would be men who performed miracles and some would even claim to be the Messiah (see 1 Jn 4:1-3 cf. Matt 24:4-14), John’s point is that only the rightful Son of God/Messiah would perform such miracles and thereby authenticate His claim. Only the rightful Son of God/Messiah Who had such power at His disposal would subject Himself to crucifixion. When combined, these two facts distinguished Jesus from all others and legitimized His claims to be Who He claimed to be.

While the purpose of the “signs” that John chose were designed to facilitate belief, the same signs would also incite some to anger. Most commentators conclude that these signs pointed to Jesus’ divinity. In addition, most commentators also conclude that the signs were produced by the power inherent in Jesus’ deity. While I accept and agree with the first conclusion (i.e. that the signs pointed to Jesus’ divinity), I do not accept the second conclusion that seems to logically follow (i.e. that Jesus relied upon His deity to produce the miracles). Rather, I believe that Jesus produced His miracles utilizing the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit was available to Him in an unprecedented way due to His sinless status as the God/man Who was totally and unconditionally yielded to God the Father’s plan for His life. I base this conclusion on at least two points: 1) it is more consistent with the principle of *kenosis* taught by Paul in Philippians 2:6-7 and 2) if we are commanded to become like Christ (Ro 12:1-2; Col 1:28; 2:6; 1 Jn 2:6), then this expectation for believers could only be met if we have the same power of the Holy Spirit available to us that was available to Jesus. In other words, we can’t be expected to become like Christ if Christ relied upon His deity during His life on earth when we are not of that same God/man combination.

In our passage today, we see the first of seven signs mentioned by John in His Gospel. The chart below organizes each of the signs by verse, description and purpose.

Passage	Sign	Comments
2:1-11	Water turned into Wine	Jesus demonstrates power over nature as God’s Son – Disciples believe
4:46-54	Healing of the nobleman’s son	Demonstrates that God’s power transcended space since Jesus was not present at the location of the boy – Some believe
5:8	Healing of man at the pool of Bethesda	Heals on the Sabbath – religious leaders demonstrate unbelief
6:1-15	Feeding 5000	Jesus demonstrates the creative power of God – multitudes look for physical food, not spiritual and want to make Jesus king instead of adhering to His teaching

6:16-21	Walking on water	Power over nature – disciples belief is strengthened
9:38	Blind man healed	Power over nature – faith of blind man contrasted with the spiritual blindness of religious crowd
11:1-44	Raises Lazarus	Power over death – brings out the worst in the religious leaders – they desire to kill Lazarus and Jesus.

Water Turned Into Wine (2:1-12)

Three days after choosing His 4th and 5th disciples (Philip & Nathanael), Jesus enters Cana in Galilee. To walk from where John was baptizing (west of the Jordan in the wilderness) to Cana would require about three days. Cana was about 4.5 to 9 miles northwest of Nazareth depending upon which estimate of its location you wish to choose.¹

It is very likely that Jesus and His disciples were invited due to Mary's involvement in the wedding. It is also possible that the wedding involved Mary's family. This may explain Mary's forwardness in requesting that Jesus do something about the fact that the wedding celebration had run out of wine. To run out of wine at a wedding celebration would have been humiliating in Jewish society that placed a premium value upon hospitality. It is likely that the bridegroom was unaware of the five disciples who had recently associated themselves with Jesus and did not factor into account the extra people. A wedding feast lasted between two to seven days depending upon the resources of the bridegroom and based upon John's narrative, it appears that Jesus and His disciples arrived the day of or the day after the wedding. Therefore, the wine shortage would have been especially embarrassing. (See quotes in Pentecost's *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* from Shepard and Farrar).²

Jesus' response to Mary's concern seems rather harsh in the English translation, but in reality it was not. After all, Jesus did grant her the request. Jesus used this same means of addressing Mary, His mother, from the Cross (19:26) and Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection (20:15). Now that Jesus had entered His public ministry, it was especially important that human relationships be subordinated to spiritual relationships. This is especially interesting in view of the supreme position and veneration that the Roman church bestows upon Mary as the "mother of God." On several occasions, John uses the phrase "His time had not yet come" or "His time had come" in reference to events in Jesus' life and ministry.

Passage	Comments	Phrase
7:6-8	Jesus' brothers encourage Jesus to perform miracles in Judea (Jerusalem) during the Feast of Tabernacles (Sept-Oct) rather than in obscure Galilee in order to convince the entire nation	His time had not yet come
7:30	Jewish religious leaders desire to seize Jesus after Jesus had accused them of not knowing God the Father	His time had not yet come **What would be the reaction of the religious community

¹ The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* indicates the distance was 9 miles, whereas the footnotes to the *New King James Study Bible* indicates the distance was 4.5 miles.

² J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 114.

		today if someone were to indicate that the Pope or Jesse Jackson or some other prominent "religious" type doesn't know God the Father?
8:20	Jesus accuses the Pharisees of not knowing the Father while He taught in the Temple	His time had not yet come
12:23	Jesus has just entered Jerusalem on the Sunday prior to His crucifixion (Palm Sunday) when Jesus did not discourage public proclamation of His right to be King as on previous occasions	His hour had come
13:1	Jesus knew that His time had come (per John) at the Last Supper with His disciples, so He washes His disciples feet.	His time had come
16:32	Jesus teaches His disciples	His time had come
17:1	Jesus prays for believers	His time had come

From this analysis, Jesus' "time" was a reference to His crucifixion as God's Son so He could become the Messiah and possess His kingdom that had been proclaimed (see Jesus' message of "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" in Matthew 10:1ff and other passages in the Synoptic Gospels). Evidently, Mary knew that Jesus was to be the Messianic king by virtue of previous revelation she had received in association with His birth (see Luke 1) and her intimate involvement in Jesus' life to that point. Jesus knew that Mary was calling upon Jesus' Messianic qualities and potential to solve this dilemma. Jesus wanted to set the record straight that any miracles that He would perform would not be the result of His presenting Himself to be the Messiah, rather the bulk of Jesus' miracles that He performed during His public ministry was for the purpose of validating His gospel message that "kingdom of heaven was at hand." Jesus knew that in order to become the Messiah over Israel, two conditions had to be met: 1) His death and 2) Israel's repentance. This is why Jesus did not accept public acclamations of His kingly, Messianic status until late in His public ministry even though in private He was acknowledged as the Messiah by those who followed Him.

The stone jars were designed to provide water for washing and ceremonial cleansing. They were large and contained about twenty gallons apiece. Therefore, with six pots, Jesus would have made about 120 gallons of wine. When God provides, He provides abundantly. The result was increased faith on the part of the disciples.