

Jesus Changes Water Into Wine

John 2: 1-11

DIG: If Yeshua had not performed any miracles yet, why might Mary have approached Him? What do you learn about Jesus and His mother from verses 3-5? Given the importance of social customs, how would you feel as the host (verse 3)? As a servant (verses 6-8)? As the master in verses 9-10? As the groom? What part does the function and size of the jars play in this story? How does the quantity and quality of the wine demonstrate Yeshua's glory?

REFLECT: Have you ever seen God provide in a miraculous way? How? What prevents us from acknowledging God's provisions? If it's not a miracle, does it still come from God? List some ways God has met your needs. How does remembering God's provision in the past encourage you to trust Him with your present needs? What simple pleasures bring you a sense of joy or fulfillment? What sometimes holds you back from enjoying life? How do you think your witness is affected when you don't take time to enjoy life?

No one is more careful about the details of time as Yochanan is. Starting from these verses and going to Yochanan 2:11 he tells us, step by step, the story of the first momentous week in the public life of Jesus. The events of **the first day** are in John 1:19-28; the story of **the second day** is John 1:29-34; **the third day** is unfolded in Yochanan 1:35-39. The three verses Yochanan 1:40-42 tell the story of **the fourth day**; the events of **the fifth day** are told in John 1:43-51. **The sixth day** is not recorded for some reason. And the events of **the seventh day** of the week are told in John 2:1-11.³⁰⁹

Jesus was not at the wedding to perform miracles or to draw attention to Himself. His public ministry would begin in Jerusalem with the first cleansing of the Temple (Yochanan 2:13-22), where no miracle would be seen. But here, on the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. The wedding took place on the third day because it was a three-day journey from Judah up to Galilee where the town of Cana was located. The Lord had returned to the region of His upbringing. Cana was about four miles from Nazareth, and this was likely the wedding of a close family member. This would explain Mary's proactive role at the feast (John 2:1). There is no mention of Joseph because he had probably passed away by that time. More than likely Mary lived with one of Yeshua's half brothers.

The seventh day: The scene is a village wedding feast (for details of the Jewish wedding feast see Al - The Birth of Jesus Foretold to Mary). Jesus and His five apostles had also been invited to the wedding (John 2:2). In the Jewish system of wedding of that day, there was a wedding feast (with a large group of people) after the wedding

(with a small number of people), which would last seven days. For a Jewish feast, wine was essential. The rabbis said that without wine there is no joy. They would normally serve the best wine first and when people got drunk and couldn't tell the difference, they would bring out the cheap stuff. But the very worst thing that could happen at a Jewish wedding was to run out of wine - a social calamity at such an important event. But the feast lasted seven days and sometimes that would happen.

Throughout Christ's earthly ministry, Miryam appeared in only three scenes. On two of those occasions, Jesus Himself explicitly repudiated the notion that her earthly authority over Him as His mother entitled her to manage any aspect of His ministry. He did this without showing her any disrespect, of course, but He nonetheless clearly and completely disclaimed the idea that Mary was in any sense a mediator of His grace.

The early Church knew nothing about the cult of Mary as it is practiced today. The first mention of Mary of the legend about her is found in the so-called *Proto-Evangelium* of James, near the end of the second century, and presents a fantastic story about her birth. It also states that she remained a virgin throughout her entire life. But Tertullian, who was one of the greatest authorities in the ancient Church, and who died in 222 AD, raised his voice against the legend concerning Mary's supposed miraculous birth. He also held that after the birth of Yeshua, Miryam and Yosef lived in a normal marriage relationship. Thus, the Church functioned for at least 150 years without idolizing the name of Miryam. Prayers directed to Mary, dead saints and angels surfaced about 600 AD. The *Ave Maria* started in 1508, and there is no record in Scripture of anyone ever calling on Mary for salvation.³¹⁰

The groom's family was expected to provide enough food and drink for everyone. Unfortunately, they hadn't planned very well. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to Him, "They have no more wine" (John 2:3). To this day in the East, hospitality is considered a sacred duty and, in some rare cases, a cause for legal action if withheld.³¹¹ The host of the wedding was undoubtedly a family member whom Mary cared a great deal for. It was like she was saying, "Do something about it." Without saying it directly, she was probably asking for a miracle even though Jesus had not performed any yet.

The issue of drinking for believers is an important one for us today. The Bible quite clearly condemns drunkenness: Do not get drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery (or leading others down the wrong path sexually). Instead, be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). God's judgment of improper use of wine appears to be reflected in His judgment on Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-7). This incident is followed by ADONAI's instruction to Aaron: You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the tent of meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, so that you can distinguish between the holy and the common,

between the unclean and the clean (Leviticus 10:9-10). The Scriptures also provide cautions against the misuse of alcoholic beverages (Proverbs 23:29-35). Proverbs 20:1 declares: **Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.** In keeping with such warnings Rabbi Sha'ul says that elders or deacons are not to be addicted to wine (First Timothy 3:3 and 8).

In spite of these warnings, the Bible recognizes that **wine** is one of the gifts of Ha'Shem to His people. **The rabbis said that without wine there is no joy** (Deuteronomy 7:13; Ecclesiastes 9:7-10; Amos 9:13-14; Joel 3:18). The LORD makes the grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate - bringing forth food from the earth: **wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts** (Psalm 104:14-15). This perspective is reflected by Rabbi Sha'ul's words in Colossians 2:20-23 and First Timothy 4:1-5 where he condemns asceticism.

It is quite clear the **wine** in the days of **Messiah** was diluted with **water**. The ratio would vary from place to place, but generally it was one part **wine** to three parts **water**. Only barbarians would **drink** unmixed **wine**. It was not grape juice. It was still **wine**, but it was diluted. Quite obviously, the **wine** purchased in stores today is unmixed. Its alcoholic content is considerably greater than that of **wine** in the first century. And the cost is incalculable with addiction and alcohol related deaths, let alone the damage to families and marriages. Teenage drinking has become rampant.

Every believer must make a decision whether to use or avoid the use of alcoholic beverages. There is no proof text for total abstinence, nor is there any text advocating social drinking. One must be guided by one's conscience and by the principles of the Word. This is an issue where consciences may differ (**Romans 14:1-5**) and the application of the scriptural principles may vary, depending upon the situation at hand. Having a glass of wine at home is quite different than going out and having a beer with someone you know is an alcoholic.

The principle of love-limiting liberty must be kept in view when making a decision on this matter. The use of wine is an area of liberty - yet Rabbi Sha'ul suggests that this liberty always be exercised with love and self-restraint (**First Corinthians 8:9-13**). He specifically declares to us even today: **It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall** (**Romans 14:21**).³¹²

But back to **the wedding feast at Cana** . . . some of the most significant exchanges between **the Lord** and **His mother** go almost undetected. But a **mother**, whose antennae are acutely attuned to **her** child, picks up signals that go unnoticed by others. **Jesus** had a way of saying things that stuck with **Mary**. **He** was never flippant, careless or rude. To the

contrary, in every conversation, **Yeshua** was always thoughtful and intentional with **His** remarks. Words spoken to **His mother** served as a holy agenda for **her**. The road **she** traveled was rocky and steep. **His** destination - the cross - threatened to completely devastate the **woman** who was the blessed **mother**. **Messiah's** statements about **His mother** were designed to deliver **her** from inevitable shame and loss, and to give **her** an identity that unshakable. And so **He** said the unexpected, shocked and caught **her** off guard. **Miryam** heard, and pondered on what **He** said.

Woman, why should that concern Me? Or you? Jesus replied (John 2:4a CJB). In **Yeshua's** day, to address **His mother** as **woman** was neither rude nor inappropriate as it is today. Later, **He** tenderly addressed **Mary** in a similar way from the cross (**Yochanan 19:26**). In the culture of first-century Galilee, it was much like addressing a woman as "Madam" or "Ma'am." It was a term of respect or affection. Yet we must bear in mind that it was most unusual when a son addressed his mother in such a manner.³¹³

However, the simple fact that **He** did not address **her** as "mother" - which any mom would notice - sent a strong signal to **Miryam** that **her** relationship to **Jesus** as **His mother** was changing. That doesn't mean that **His** words didn't pierce **Mary's** heart. To declare, in essence, "What do I have to do with you," or "What do you and I have in common," must have hurt her deeply. After all, **she** had given birth to **Him**. **Yeshua** might speak that way to others, but how could **He** say such a thing to **His own mother**? Even more than when **He** was twelve years old and started **His** separation at the Temple in Jerusalem (**Luke 2:41-50**), here **He** was signaling a *further* separation from **her**. **He** was defining boundaries in **His** relationship with **Mary** as **He** was preparing to start **His** public ministry. **He** was no longer following **His mother's** directives, but doing the work of **His** Father.³¹⁴ More teaching would be necessary (see **Ey - Jesus' Mother and Brothers**), but the last time we see **Miryam** in the Bible, we see **her** right where **she** belongs - with **John**, the other **talmidim** and disciples of the resurrected **Messiah**, waiting for the coming **Ruach HaKadosh** (**Acts 1:14**).

Had **Jesus** submitted to **His mother's** suggestion and leading, there might have been some grounds for "Mary worship," and for the claim by the Roman Catholic Church that "Mary is the hope of all." But here, at the very beginning of **His** ministry, the ground is cut from under any such claim.³¹⁵

My time has not yet come. Because **His** public ministry had not yet begun, **He** told **Mary** that **His time** of being revealed as **the Messiah** had **not yet come** (**Yochanan 2:4b, 7:30, 8:20, 12:23, 12:27, 16:32, 17:1**). **His** public ministry could not begin in Galilee. It needed to begin in the City of David. The miracles that would authenticate **His** claim of being **the Meshiach** needed to begin there. **He** was on **God's** timetable, not hers. As a **man**, **He** was **her** son. But as **God**, **He** was **her** Lord. It was not **her** business to command **Him** in spiritual

matters. The way **He** spoke to **her** simply reminded **her** of that fact without showing **her** any real disrespect. *Then He turned the water into wine.*

After that, **Miryam** always remained in the background. In fact, the last mention of **her** in the Bible is in **Acts 1:14**. **She** never sought out or accepted the kind of superiority so many seem determined to try to force on **her** today. **She** never again attempted to intercede with **Jesus** for miracles, special favors, or other blessings on behalf of **her** friends, relatives or anyone else. It is only sure foolishness that causes anyone to imagine that **she** should now be prayed to and venerated.³¹⁶

From **Miryam's** response, it is evident that however surprised or confused **she** was with **His** response, **she** nevertheless was not overly offended. **His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you" (John 2:5)**. As **Mary** was trying to sort out **her** relationship with **Jesus** **she** was constantly thrown off balance by things **He** said and did. **She** struggled to come to terms with **her** identity as **the mother of Yeshua**, and as a follower of **the Messiah**. **Her Son** turned out to be more of a challenge than **she** ever expected.

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons or from 75 to 115 liters of water (John 2:6). Water was required for two purposes. First, it was required for cleansing the feet on entry to the house. The roads were not surfaced. Sandals were merely a sole attached to the foot by straps. On a dry day the feet were covered with dust and on a wet day they were soiled with mud. The water was used for cleansing them.

Second, it was required for hand washing. The Oral Law (see **Ei - The Oral Law**) demanded this be done not only at the beginning of a meal, but also between courses. If it were not done the hands were technically unclean. First the hand was held upright and the water poured over it in such a way that it ran down to the elbow (the hand was considered to run from the fingertips to the elbow); then the hand was held pointing down and the water was poured in such a way that it ran to the fingertips. Everyone eating did this with each hand, and then each palm was cleansed by rubbing it with the fist of the other hand. It was for these reasons that these great stone jars of water stood there.³¹⁷

Jesus said to the servants: Fill the jars with water; so they filled them to the brim. Nothing could be added to them; at the time of the miracle the jars contained nothing but water. Then He told them: Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet (John 2:7-8a). By this time in history, turning water into wine had become like a sleight-of-hand parlor trick. Today, we would say it would be like pulling a rabbit out of a hat. Illusionists in pagan temples used special pitchers with hidden chambers to create the impression that they were pouring either water or wine at will. It seems that **Yeshua**

revealed His sense of humor in choosing to solve the family's problem by actually doing what others could only simulate. Only He left no room for trickery or doubt. While He stood back - perhaps even reclining at a table in another room - **the servants** handled **the jars**, fetched **the water**, and drew the sample. Then, somewhere between **the jars** and **the master of the banquet**, the miracle took place.³¹⁸

So it was at a village girl's wedding in **Cana** that **Yeshua** first showed His glory; and it was there that **the talmidim** caught a dazzling glimpse of who He really was. **The servants did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine.** This is the first of **Jesus'** seven miracles in **John's** book (**Yochanan 2:1-11, 4:43-54; 5:1-15; 6:1-15; 6:16-24; 9:1-34; 11:1-44**). He did not realize where it had come from, though **the servants who had drawn the water knew (John 2:8a-9a)**. Thus, this miracle was not a public one being witnessed by everyone at **the wedding**. On the contrary, only **Mary, His apostles** and some **servants**, witnessed it. **The purpose of the first miracle here, and His last miracle when He raised Lazarus from the dead, was that His apostles would believe in Him.**

Then **the master of the banquet** called the **groom** (whose parents were responsible for the feast) **aside** and commented on his departure from the common custom: **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 (John 2:9b-10)**. Some have said this was grape juice and not **wine**. No host, however, would ever be complemented for serving grape juice at a Jewish **wedding**. Oy vey! The word for **wine** used here is the *Greek* word for *fermented wine*.

John ends the narrative with a reminder of the nature of what happened and of its effect on **the talmidim**. **What Yeshua did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which He revealed His glory (Yochanan 2:11)**. There were two results from this miracle. First, **Jesus** manifested **His** power to create. Secondly, this first miracle was so that **His talmidim** - five of them at that point - would believe in **Him**. **Christ's** last miracle would be somewhat the same. In the rising of **Lazarus (John 11:1-44)**, only a few would witness it, and it was also so **His apostle's** faith in **Him** would be confirmed.