

## Seven “signs” in John’s gospel

John now begins his account of Jesus’ ministry, with a focus on the overall purpose of the gospel account

- “...these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...”
- John uses seven of Jesus’ miracles throughout the gospel as evidence for his claim.
  - He refers to these miracles as “signs”
  - What does a sign do? (Directs/guides to a destination/conclusion)
- Referring to miracles in this way is nothing new:
  - The OT refers to *oth* and *mopheth*, “signs and wonders”.
  - A few prominent instances, especially with regard to the miraculous:
    - Gen 9:12, 13, 17
    - Ex 4:1-9, 28, 30
    - Ex 7:1-5
    - Ex 12:13
    - Deut 4:34-35
    - Isa 7:10-16
    - Ezek 24:27

## 2:1-11

Cana –

- About 5 miles from Nazareth
- Home of Nathanael
- Site of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> signs

Weddings are a big deal in Jewish custom, especially in smaller towns like Cana

- Week-long celebration of joy and hospitality with lots of guests and food
  - For the food/drink to run out would be humiliating for the new couple
- Wine = GR, *oinos*
  - Can refer to grape juice or fermented wine
  - Some speculate a diluted mixture 1/3 wine to 2/3 water
  - It is doubtful that Jesus would drink, or facilitate drinking, intoxicants leading to uncontrolled behavior.
  - To focus on the alcohol/social drinking debate here would be to completely subvert John’s purpose for this part of the narrative.

*“Jesus’ mother was there”*

- The mention of Mary may indicate that she was in some way connected/related to the family
- Which could explain her urgency in replenishing the wine

*“Woman, what have I to do with thee?”*

- “Woman” a title of respect, not scorn.
  - Equivalent to “lady” or “madam”
  - Same reply to Mary while on the cross (*“Woman, behold thy son...”*)
- Lit. “what is there to Me and to thee?”
  - Possibly, “What business is it of ours?”
  - Whether this reply is a rebuke or a gentle comment to disarm, something in Jesus’ reply assures her He will act.

*“My time has not yet come.”*

- Variations repeated throughout the gospel (6x).
- The time for His full manifestation as the Messiah has not yet come
  - Jesus is both aware of, and in control of, the events leading to His glorification (17:1).

*“Whatever He says to you, do it.”*

- Dramatic irony?
- Mary is confident of the results, whatever they will be.

Stone jars

- Jars used for ceremonial washing of hands before, during and after meals, and for washing feet.
- 20-30 gallons = 120-180 gallons

*“Filled to the brim.”*

- The need is met above & beyond what is requested (i.e. “water of life” and feeding of 5000)

*“Fill the jars with water... Now draw some out...”*

- There is an element of active faith here: “some” refers back to the “water”. No mention of a change until the master actually tastes it.

*“You have saved the good wine until now.”*

- Suggests the superiority of Jesus over previous provision/revelation.
  - This is one of the main ideas of the Hebrew letter: Something better/superior has come.

## **2:12-25**

There are similar accounts of Jesus upending the moneychangers’ tables in the temple in the synoptic gospels, but they fall near the end of Jesus’ ministry, rather than toward the beginning.

- Two theories:
  - John is more concerned with thematic storytelling, rather than linear storytelling.
  - Or, there are two different occasions where Jesus has a similar reaction.

Jewish laws permitted the selling of animals for sacrifice within the temple courtyard, but it had obviously become a business enterprise rather than a way to facilitate worship.

*“He made a whip of cords”*

- Some speculate that Jesus is brandishing a weapon in anger as a symbol of judgment. It may have also served a more practical use to get the animals moving.

*“Stop turning My Father’s house into a marketplace!”*

- If this is parallel to the synoptics, Jesus also says: *“My house will be a house of prayer but you have turned it into a den of thieves!”* (Lk. 19:46)
  - Imagery from Jer. 7:9-11, where Jeremiah is called to rebuke the corrupt priesthood:
    - *“Do you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and follow other gods that you have not known? Then do you come and stand before Me in this house called by My name and say, ‘We are delivered, so we can continue doing all these detestable acts’? Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your view? Yes, I too have seen it.”*
  - Also possibly an interesting take on Mal. 3:1-3:

- *“Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to His temple, the Messenger of the covenant you desire—see, He is coming,” says the Lord of Hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who will be able to stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner’s fire and like cleansing lye. He will be like a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will present offerings to the Lord in righteousness.”*

*“Zeal for Your house will consume Me.”*

- Lest we think that Jesus was completely stoic or serene at all times, His actions here reveal His inward passion for the Father and His level of zeal for the Father’s interests.
- The verse called to mind by His disciples is Psalm 69:9, which has Messianic implications throughout.
  - Putting this verse into its original context helps drive the point John intends by including the reference:
    - *“Do not let those who put their hope in You be disgraced because of me, Lord God of Hosts; do not let those who seek You be humiliated because of me, God of Israel. For I have endured insults because of You, and shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers and a foreigner to my mother’s sons because zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult You have fallen on me.”*

*“What sign of authority will You show us for doing these things?”*

- This demand is consistent from the Jewish leaders throughout Jesus’ ministry.
  - It is also consistently ignored when Jesus provides undeniable proof of His authority (11:47-48; cf 1:11).

*“Destroy this temple and I will raise it up again in three days.”*

- The Jews misunderstand Jesus’ meaning, believing Him to speak of the physical temple.
- The distinction between the physical temple and Jesus’ body is better explained when looking at the Greek words John uses to describe both:
  - In 2:14, John uses the word *hieron*, meaning “shrine, holy building” to refer to the temple complex where the moneychangers had set up their wares.
  - In 2:19, Jesus uses the word *naos*, referring to a “sanctuary” or “dwelling place of deity” to describe Himself.
  - In this light, it can be said that the Glory of the Lord had returned to the midst of the temple (re Mal. 3:1; cf 1:14)
- In missing the subtlety of Jesus’ vocabulary, the Jews completely missed the point of what He was prophesying: the true symbol of Jesus’ universal authority through His resurrection.
  - However, John tells us even the disciples didn’t understand what He meant until after His resurrection (22).
    - *“The author’s note illustrates the principle that the Gospel presents the life of Jesus in the light of the Resurrection and of the apostolic experience based on the results of that event.”*
- The result is once again underlined by John: *“And they believed...”*

The account closes with a general statement that Jesus performed additional signs, resulting in many more coming to follow Him.

- John concludes by stating that the faith of the people had a level of shallowness to it, though.
- Jesus does not become self-satisfied or content by the crowd’s reaction because He knows their hearts.
  - We’ll see later on that as Jesus continues to provide deeper concepts that are more difficult to understand, He will lose many followers (6:64-66) who are simply following Him for superficial reasons.