



John 2 – Hours & Signs



The beautiful Sea of Galilee, viewed from the hilly slopes to the northwest in Galilee.



Leading Thoughts...

On the Third Day, John 2:1-12

The Sea of Galilee is the second-lowest lake in the world at 705 ft. below sea level (the Dead Sea is lowest). The western coast of the Sea of Galilee rises up into foothills and then further west up to 2-3000 foot mountains including Mt. Meron at 4000ft. Mount Hermon, to the north rises up to 9200ft and is the source of the Jordan River's headwaters (in Panias). The beautiful landscapes in these areas offer lush vegetation and pastoral vistas, all a marvelous backdrop for the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

- On the previous day, Jesus was with John the Baptist and disciples on the Jordan River at Bethany, south the Sea of Galilee. After assembling six of the men who will soon be called as His Apostles, Jesus announces His plan to travel north to Capernaum, which is up on the north shore. The trip about 20 miles up to the north coast of the Sea, a two-day journey, and Cana is about 10 miles west of the coast.
- John continues to use his references to progressive days – this “third day” is likely 3 days after the last day referenced in John 1, which is when Jesus finds Nathanael & Philip. Jewish weddings of the time typically lasted 7 days, and if the bride was a virgin the actual wedding ceremony occurred on Wednesday.
- As the narrative moves to John 2, Jesus' public ministry begins. His private ministry begins in John 13. This first miracle in Cana is actually “semi-public” – only the family, the disciples and the servants knew what happened.



Into the Word...

A Wedding at Cana

After Jesus got acquainted at the Jordan with the six new disciples, He had said to His newbie followers “let's go to Capernaum”. Most were from up that way and would be glad to get back home, especially considering their growing awareness that this association with the Messiah was going to take them away from home for a sustained period of time.

The group walked north for 3-4 days (80 miles). Perhaps Jesus got a message from his Mother Mary that she was helping out at a friend's wedding in Cana and He should come join with their family relatives & friends. So from the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, they headed west another 10 miles into the foothills.

- Cana (Nathanael's home) is close to Nazareth but smaller, there would likely be many friends & family that knew each other between the two villages. When Jesus arrived at the wedding, He had a group of 10 or so including his new disciples, a couple of women including Mary Magdalene, and his family.

A wedding is a joyful celebration of love & family. The focus on the important foundation of marriage and family presents an excellent setting for Jesus' public introduction. In those days, the wedding may go seven days, but the actual wedding is likely on Wednesday as long as the bride is a virgin. After the celebration, the groom will take the bride home to his father's house. It is reasonable to see emphasis from Jesus on the Family institution and marriage – many scholars draw a parallel between the 7 days of Creation with these first 7 days of Jesus since baptism – there would also be a contrast to be made with Jesus last week before Crucifixion.



Bible Study Journal

One of the key Bible Study tools you should have available to you is a Bible Atlas and/or a Bible Handbook, such as Halley's. If you have a good study Bible, it will have maps and enough additional information, but there is lot's more that can be discovered. Use these tools to look at a good topographical map of Israel and note the terrain west of the Sea of Galilee.

- What would the two-day hike north have been like if you were included?
- What kind of thoughts would the new disciples possibly have had during the trip? Make notes in your journal!
- What kind of impression did Jesus make when His group of 10 or more arrived at the wedding?
- What kind of issue was created as a result?

Whatever He Says

The arrival of Jesus' entourage in Cana probably caused some anxiety for the person responsible for the details of the feast. He needed to be sure he had enough food and other provisions, including wine. And indeed, the wine proved to be a problem.

Mary very possibly was helping the bride's family with the occasion, and she had opportunity to be aware of the wine shortage. Her close relationship with her son led her to confide quickly with Him. However, there must have been some hint of anticipation and opportunity in her voice, without her being able to appreciate the scope and weight of God the Father's plan for His Son. Jesus responded with a common expression, "Woman..." –this is a normal, cordial address of that time, and should not be taken by us today as being rude or unkind. At the same time, it is different from saying "Mom...", and this introduced a distancing to Mary that she would continue to become aware of in the coming days. Jesus is moving from being a son growing up in Nazareth to being the Messiah accomplishing His Father's mission as the Savior. He is saying "the wine is your concern, but it is not mine".



- His "hour", 2:4, is a reference that is in John seven times, which associates Jesus with the God's sovereign plan of the ages, a divine schedule decreed by God before the foundation of the world. Note the last use in John 17, where Jesus now says His hour "is come".
- From this interchange, we do still have a major statement that can be much food for thought from [John 2:5](#): "Whatever He says to you, do it."



Bible Study Journal

Take a look at these references in John to have a complete picture of how Jesus refers to His “hour”. [John 2:4](#); [5:28](#); [7:6](#), [8](#), [30](#); [8:20](#); [12:23](#), [27](#); [13:1](#); [17:1-5](#). Also note the commentary provided in [Heb. 9:26](#). Technically this is the endpoint of God’s plan for Redemption: crucifixion / resurrection / ascension. Make some notes in your journal about what you learn from these verses.

The Beginning of Signs

- The Greek word *seimeion* and translated “signs” – refers not so much to the action or specific result, but rather the emphasis is on the significance of what is being declared: Jesus is God the Messiah. It is a word that expresses a significant display of power that points to the overarching work of God and the greater significance beyond the work itself.
 - In a manner of speaking, John says it this way in 2:11: “*It Starts Here*”. Jesus “Manifested His glory”, an unusual emphasis from John, and note this verse along with [1:14](#) & [31](#).
 - There are eight miracle signs (some say seven) in John – 6 of them are not even mentioned in the Synoptic (Matthew, Mark, Luke) Gospels. There are a total of 35 miracles in all the Gospels.
 - The eight in John:
 - 2 – water into wine
 - 4 – heal official’s son
 - 5 – heal paralytic
 - 6 – feed 5000
 - 6 – walk on water
 - 9 – heal blind man
 - 11 – raise Lazarus
 - 21 – 2nd catch of fish
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Bible Study Journal

How does each of these miracle events serve to manifest the glory of the Messiah? How do you think the observers, especially the disciples, perceived and understood this manifestation?

Down to Capernaum

In [John 2:12](#), “down” here describes the trip going eastward from Cana back to the Sea of Galilee and the town of Capernaum. The trip went from the higher elevations around Cana (710’ above sea level) down to the Sea’s shore (700’ below sea level). Compare this with how the Bible always refers to going “up” to Jerusalem, even if the person is actually going down in elevation, or in any direction – the Jew always goes “up” to Jerusalem. Capernaum was spoken of as “His city” (9:1; [Mk. 2:1](#)) and John refers to Capernaum as Jesus’ home base. While John’s gospel provides the most thorough coverage of Jesus’ 16-month Galilean Ministry, much information is also given about the confrontations with Jewish leaders every time He went to Jerusalem, mainly during the Feasts. This visit to Capernaum seems to be a short time of rest before Jesus “sets His face towards Jerusalem” (Lu. 9:51). Perhaps it is already a family favorite vacation spot, and Jesus may have wanted to have personal time with Mary before acclamation turns to crisis. You can almost imagine Jesus sitting on the porch looking out over the Sea and saying to Mary “Mom, we need to talk”. Indeed, she is never mentioned again by John until Jesus’ Crucifixion.

Cleansing the Temple

A review of the overall structure of John reveals three Passovers (some suggest a fourth) in the narrative which become the framework of Jesus’ public ministry. After obscurity in Nazareth for 30 years, Jesus came to John the Baptist at the

Jordan ready to be declared “The Lamb of God”. From there He had three years to declare and demonstrate the Good News of the Gospel.

- The 1st Year of public ministry is covered in John 2-6 – After baptism and Jesus’ Temptation (not in John but see Matt. 4 & Lu. 4 to understand they happen before John 2), the first disciples join with Him. He takes the first four disciples up to the Cana wedding and then over to Capernaum for a visit. Then they head to Jerusalem for the first Passover ([Jn. 2:13](#)) during which He ministers to Nicodemus (Jn. 3). After the Passover, they journey back up to Galilee. On the way, Jesus ministers to the Woman at the Well (Jn. 4) then they proceed towards Capernaum.
- 2nd Year, John 7-10 – John refers to the second Passover [Jn. 6:4](#) and Jesus takes an important trip back to Jerusalem, and then again, He goes back to Galilee.
- 3rd Year, John 10-11 – John reports the third Passover in [Jn. 10:22](#), [11:55-57](#). These events become preparation for Jesus’ Triumphal Entry and the Last Supper.

This “cleansing of the Temple” in [Jn. 2:13-17](#) is actually the first of two similar events. See the second time when Jesus does this is right after His Triumphal Entry in Matt. 21. Here in John, Jesus is introducing “the plan”: The Old (Mosaic Law) is being replaced by the New (Redeeming Grace).

Herod’s Temple was surrounded by a broad open area called the Court of the Gentiles, as you can see in this picture. The trading activity was an extension of a desire to help travelers who arrive and need provisions for their sacrifice. The money changers were there because the Temple required use of Jewish (silver) coins. However, over the years, convenience evolved into corruption & greed as the elite Jewish leaders saw opportunity for personal profit and power. The result of all this cacophony was that the common person had no place to worship or have quiet prayer.



- [Jn. 2:17](#), as Jesus condemns making God’s house a place of material business, John recalls that the disciples compared His actions to [Psa. 69:9](#) and the “zeal” that consumes the true worshiper. Psalm 69 is quoted often in NT ([Jn 7:3-5](#); [15:25](#); [Matt. 27:34](#), [48](#); [Rom. 11:9-10](#); [15:3](#)).
- [Jn. 2:19](#), Jesus refers to His body as a temple, the body indwelt by God Himself (1:14) and prophesies that He (His body) will be raised up. This looks forward to later NT truth about believers being God’s temple and indwelt by Holy Spirit. These kinds of statements helped to move Jesus closer to the Cross. Jesus didn’t appease their idle curiosity but instead declared His ultimate vindication.

Thoughts for Further Study

1. In what ways do you think going to the Cana wedding helped, or didn’t help, Jesus as He was just about to begin His public ministry?
2. What is unique and special about Jesus performing this miracle at the wedding?
3. What are the differences between His public and private ministry which began in John 13 in the Upper Room?
4. What were the results of the miraculous water being turned into wine?
5. If you had been with Jesus at the wedding, how would you have described seeing Jesus’ glory manifested as John puts it?
6. If you had been at the Temple as Jesus started to clear the Temple, would you have described Him as being angry? Is that good or bad?
7. In 2:24, Jesus is said not to have “entrusted” Himself to anyone. What do you think this means, why did He take this approach?
8. To the new disciple standing to the side as Jesus began the cleansing, not yet knowing Jesus very well, what might he have been confused by? What questions might he have had?
9. Have you ever had a time in your life when you had a real important need and you chose to take it to the Lord and then waited on Him to see how He might provide? What happened?
10. Our bodies, according to [1 Cor. 6:19](#), as Christians our bodies are the temple where God abides by His Holy Spirit. Does your temple need some cleansing?