

John 2:1-12

Last week, we looked at the previous passage. In it, Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus. Jesus has a short conversation with Nathanael. He tells Nathanael that he would see greater things than Jesus simply seeing him when he was under the fig tree. And so the question last week became: when will this happen?

The answer is: in this week's text!

So let's get to it...

2:1

John has been giving us a progression of days. Let's add them up!

Day 1) 1:19-28, John begins proclaiming.

Day 2) 1:29-34, John continues to bear witness to Christ, who has come.

Day 3) 1:35-42, Jesus calls disciples (Andrew, Simon, and the unnamed disciple).

Day 4) 1:43-51, Jesus calls Philip and converts Nathanael.

"The third day" → Our text.

The question is, how do you count from "Day 4" to the "Third Day"?

If we count the way the Jewish people in Jesus' day counted, "third day" would actually end up being the 6th day. If we count the way Greek folks counted, "third day" would actually end up being the 7th day.

Why does it matter?

Which one do you think it is?

This is the first time we hear about Jesus' mother. Notice that her name is not given! Again, an odd omission given that John likes to use names. Odds are, it is because John wants us to focus on something other than the identity of the woman to whom Jesus was born.

2:2

The stage is set.

Some people make a big deal out of the fact that Jesus was "cool" enough to be invited to a wedding. Not really a big deal, but it is worth noting.

The liturgy for a wedding takes note of this, saying that our Lord honored the estate of marriage by going to one. Again, not really a big deal, but it is worth noting.

2:3

This wasn't supposed to happen. It's not worth speculating why they ran out of wine. (They were poor and couldn't afford a lot; it was a very large party; the people at the party knew how to party.) The point is, they did. And this was not a good thing! (Heck, when your own mother notices the party became dry unnecessarily, it's a problem...)

2:4

John uses this as an opportunity to introduce another theme: Jesus' "hour." Hour for what? Good! John has you in suspense wanting more information. Looks like you'll want to keep reading 😊
Jesus knows that, if there is going to be more wine, it will depend on him.

2:5

"His mother" (again, no name given) sets the stage for what is about to happen.

Some like to make a big deal about the fact that Jesus' mother can demand things of the workers at the wedding feast. Some say that, maybe, it was because the wedding was for a relative of Jesus, or that his mother had standing in the community...

But if John wanted us to know more about Jesus' mother, he would at least have given us her name. There's no benefit in chasing that rabbit. You won't catch it, and you'll end up stuck in a rabbit hole. (Overextending the metaphor?)

2:6

John doesn't include any information that is not important. So, what do we make of these jars being purification jars?

First guess would be to make the link between purification and wine. Which takes us (obliquely) in the direction of the Lord's Supper. Ironic, because John does not have the "Lord's Supper" in the same way the Synoptics do. More on that when we get to John 6 😊 (If we get to John 6.)

Second guess, is to give the reader something to refer to. These jars were real, and really large. And, from now on, every time the reader of the gospel would see one of these stone jars, he (or she) would be reminded of this story. Clever John, clever!

Add it up, and we have 120-180 gallons. More than a bathtub.

2:7

Jesus is either close enough to the wedding party that he has influence at their wedding feast, or is known well enough to have influence at any party he would attend. Neither is stated, but my guess is it is a combination of both. Jesus is popular. But the point isn't that the servants did what Jesus said. John moves this story along as quickly as possible to get to the main point. And so shall we.

2:8

We are not told what has happened yet. All we know is that there was water placed in the stone jars and that some of this was to be taken to the master of the feast. John is keeping us in suspense. Everything is being focused on what is coming...

2:9

We are not told when the water was turned into wine (or even, explicitly by whom). All we know is that there is now wine where there was once water. Jesus will get the credit for this, but when the transformation took place, we will not know.

2:10

It's easy to get distracted and make a big deal about how Jesus is not a teetotalist. You could even get distracted by the fact that Jesus made more than a bathtub full of wine for people who had been partying for quite a while. You could even get distracted by the fact that "good wine" is the kind that makes you feel "good."

Tangent: the claim by some that wine in Jesus' day was nothing more than stale grape juice, devoid of any inhibiting properties is putting the cart of teetotalism before the horse of the facts concerning wine making in the 1st Century. There is no way for us to know the exact alcohol content of the wine Jesus made, or of the average wine used in the 1st Century. But we do know that the technology did not exist to prevent fermentation.

The point is, Jesus made REAL WINE from REAL WATER.

We can't do this today; people couldn't do it back then.

There might have been some doubt about the miraculous nature of Jesus' comments to Nathanael (maybe he was hiding somewhere and spying on Nathanael, which is why he saw him before he saw him). There is no doubt about Jesus' miraculous act here.

2:11

The first SIGN! John indicates that there will be more. These signs are important.

This sign, turning water into wine, John tells us: “manifested his glory.” The disciples, as a result, believe in him. We are not told what this means, but we will later on in the gospel.

What is the substance of the “glory” Jesus manifested?

If you’re thinking that this verse raises more questions than it answers, I’d have to agree with you. But it sets in motion the direction for the rest of the gospel.

2:12

Seems like an innocent description of what Jesus and those around him did after the big party. But, no details in John are accidental or there just to be there.

But what you have is a man, his mother and his brothers going down to their home. A family. Adding the disciples of Jesus to the family sends a clear message: Jesus treats his disciples like family. Jesus did his mother’s will at the wedding feast because of her relationship with him. Jesus did what was in her best interest. We saw in this miracle story how Jesus responds to the request of one of his family.

We also saw how disciples are considered family. Gospel. Plain and simple!