

# SIGNS THAT JESUS IS SAVIOR

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*By the Book*™ A Chapter by  
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## Let's Begin

*Where I live in Georgia, a sure sign summer is ended and fall has come are the trees scattered all over the foothills of the North Georgia mountains. Their colors change from a rich green carpet to splotches of neon paint. Bright yellows, oranges, and reds cover the hillside. Fall has arrived. The trees undeniably point to it.*

*John offers two signs in chapter two that just as undeniably point to Jesus as the Savior of the world. As we study this chapter, let's follow this simple outline:*

### I. The First Sign is Jesus Creating the Wine (vv. 1-12)

### II. The Second Sign is Jesus Cleansing the Temple (vv. 13-25)

## I. The First Sign is Jesus Creating the Wine (vv. 1-12)

John indicates to us that his selection of the miracles Jesus performed was not exhaustive (20:30). He chose seven signs which would manifest His glory and produce faith. Each of the seven had a definite purpose, the first of which is the present miracle. As we shall see, Jesus' turning the water into wine stands as a remarkable picture of how a sinner is saved through the Word of God.

Moses began his work in Egypt with a miracle of judgment—turning water into blood (cp. Exodus 7:14-25). However, Jesus began His ministry with a miracle of joy turning water into wine (1:17). Furthermore, while Moses stood before the most powerful ruler of that day to perform the Exodus miracle, Jesus traveled to a quiet little village in Galilee to perform His.

Let's look first at the wedding. According to John, there was a marriage-festival taking place in Cana. Jesus and His family were specifically invited to this earthly celebration (vv. 1-2). Here Jesus would seal His approval of what was ordained in Eden—marriage is sacred, ordained by God Himself.

Given the culture of divorce we have become, marriage is the last relic of paradise left among men. Matrimony is a serious decision and must not be entered into lightly. In fact, it is not too much to say, that with the exception of salvation, marriage is the most important step anyone could ever take. No society is in a healthy state where marriage is regarded lightly.

Being personally invited to this ceremony, Jesus did not hesitate to attend. After all, He was not a hermit. Unlike John the Baptist who was almost an antisocialist, Jesus welcomed gatherings of friends, especially those who celebrated God's creation and institutions. Marriages took the back seat to no other human festival with the exception of Passover.

There is surely a lesson in here for all of us. We should be very cautious in attending any gathering where, for whatever purpose, the Son of God could not be invited. In fact, we could actually say, where Jesus is not welcome, Christians should not gather—at least for social pleasures.

### Reflection Connection

*Why do you suppose it is significant that Jesus began His ministry by performing a miracle at a wedding? Do you think there are any affirmations we may draw about Jesus' view of marriage? Explain.*



### Reflection Connection

*Many people believe Christians should not attend social gatherings like weddings parties. What do you think? Where do Christians draw the line at what is and is not an acceptable gathering to attend?*

There will be times when believers who are specifically equipped and spiritually mature are called upon to go to a place where Jesus is not even known, much less welcome. We call these special people missionaries, and we applaud their ministry. The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention is highly selective about sending missionaries into areas where the Christian faith is not known, spending untold monies and man-hours to make sure the missionaries are equipped to face a hostile environment.

As Jesus was enjoying the festivities of the wedding celebration, a peculiar thing happened: the wine ran out. John does not inform us of the details. Thus, we do not know if the host did not plan well, or more guests showed up than were invited. Yet, that the wine was expended is precisely the occasion for Jesus to eventually work His first miracle.

In the Bible, wine is often a symbol of joy. The Hebrew people were exhorted to give thanks for the abundant harvest of grain, oil, and wine (Psalm 104:15). Implied in this is an occasion for sadness when the fields were barren.

The empty wine vessels at the wedding serve as the perfect picture of the emptiness of religion in that day. Judaism was an empty wine vat. All joy, heart, and life had gone from it (cp. Matthew 21:19; Acts 8:27). The Jewish nation was spiritually bankrupt, built on external ceremonies and so satisfying nothing in the heart.

Even more, we can surely say that religion in our day offers a dry vat as well. Our nation is filled with religion. Even the churches sometimes sadly appear to be peddling Christianity as a religion rather than preaching Christ as a Person. The vessels are empty without Jesus. There is no joy, no heart, and no life without Him.

Why the host turned to Mary, the mother of Jesus, is not clear. Jesus had not performed miracles prior to this time, so they could not have known He possessed supernatural powers. However, we do understand why Mary turned to Jesus (v. 3). More than anyone else, she knew something different about Him. She never forgot the time Jesus was teaching in the temple at the tender age of twelve. Nor did she fail to recall the angel's message to her about Jesus some thirty years earlier.

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wrong.*

Make a mental reminder that those who know Jesus intimately, turn to Him when things go wrong. They know that Jesus holds the answer in His hands. Jesus replied to Mary: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (v. 4). While Jesus showed no disrespect in addressing her as "woman", it is not what we would expect. Nevertheless, that is exactly like the Lord Jesus. He never acts based upon our expectations alone. His criterion is much higher.

Perhaps Mary was anxious to lift the shadow of suspicion from her. Ever since the day when she shared with Elizabeth about the angel's message of the miraculous birth of Jesus, she had lived under the dark cloud of gossip and rumor. The gossip was that she acted indecently, not to mention betrayed her husband to be, Joseph.



The point John seems to be driving toward us is that Jesus was setting aside His physical bonds to Mary as her born son. He was her son to be sure. However, the time now had come for Him to be much, much more—Mary’s Savior.

There comes a time in every person’s life when Jesus must become much, much more. He is more than a historical figure to be studied. He is more than a martyr to be honored. He is more than a teacher from which to learn. He is more than a model to mimic. There comes a time when Jesus must be your personal Savior. That is what He was saying as He severed His mother/son relationship with Mary.

Jesus further stated that His “hour had not yet come” (v. 4). This phrase occurs often in John (7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). The first time Jesus mentions it is here to His mother; but the last time He mentions it is in prayer to His Father (17:1). The hour was obviously His suffering on the cross (cp. Ps. 118:24). Only the shedding of blood could atone for human sin. The cross was destined to open up a fountain of grace, to fill the hearts of men everywhere. Salvation comes not through religion or church. Rather redemption comes through a crucified Savior.

With no response to Jesus, Mary instead turns to those who informed her of the crisis: “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (v. 5). There is a striking lesson for us in Mary’s words. Christians need to heed her wisdom—whatever Jesus tells us to do, do it (cp. 15:14; Luke 6:47)! Mary’s words must be our motto.

What church could go wrong implementing Mary’s wisdom—“Whatever Jesus says do it?” Are we obedient to our risen Lord? In addition, the unsaved sinner does well to consider Mary’s wisdom—whatever Jesus says, do it. In fact, the only way a person can be saved is to follow this wisdom.

We have seen both the wedding and the wine. Now let us turn to the solution Jesus proposed by observing the water pots (vv. 6-11). The significance of the water pots cannot be underestimated. The number six, according to biblical numerology, stands for imperfection. Six is the number of man. And while God did not make man incomplete or imperfect, he became that way through sin in the Garden of Eden (cp. Gen. 3:1-11).

The water pots themselves were used for purifying one’s body before and after each meal. Thus, they possessed a ceremonial purpose. They were religious vessels. And, the fact that the water pots were empty is a fitting commentary on religion both then and now. Religion is an empty ritual that offers to its followers a vacuous lifeless meaning.

This is the perfect picture of our modern world. It is empty, lost, and offers no hope to anyone who would follow it. One need only look deeply into the eyes of people one meets to find positive proof their way bears them no answers. In fact, it’s not too much to say that our world has turned to “broken cisterns” about which Jeremiah warned (Jer. 2:13). The pleasures of sin just cannot satisfy (cp. John 4:13).

Jesus instructs the men to fill the empty pots with water. Water is a symbol of the written word in both John’s gospel and other New Testament passages (3:5; Eph. 5:26). The Word of God is the only substance that can fill empty, thirsty hearts. We are spiritual beings, craving spiritual sustenance; therefore, only the spiritual can satisfy (Ps. 42:1-2; John 4:14; 7:37; Rev. 22:17).



The men followed Mary's wise advice and listened to Jesus: "Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim" (v. 7). God's word fills completely our need. Jesus knew that man's sustenance was by every word that proceeds out of God's mouth (Matt. 4:4).

After completely filling the jars, Jesus instructed them to "draw out now and bear unto the governor of the feast" (v. 8). Once we have taken in the Word of God, we must draw out of it the thirst-quenching truths to the rest of the world. How often we think the truth we learn from Scripture is exclusively for us. While we surely grow through Scripture, God expects us to "draw out" and bear it to the world.

Note finally, the wine that came forth. The governor was very impressed by the quality of the wine: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now" (v. 10). The miracle was amazing. A few things are significant in this passage.

*First, the wine that Jesus miraculously created was fresh produce of the grape.* What took months to plant, nurture, harvest, and produce, Jesus created with not so much as one spoken word.

*Second, because it was fresh, it was the best!* The extreme measures the ancients went to in order to keep the grape juice from turning to vinegar which was unfit for human consumption, is unimaginable for us living today. The wine Jesus made was sweet, refreshing, and thoroughly delicious. In addition, because it was fresh, it could be consumed both without diluting and without concern for intoxication.

Many today assume the wine that Jesus made was similar to the wine people consume from their purchase at the corner liquor store. That is decidedly not the case. First of all, there was no such thing as distilled wines, liquors or fortified spirits in Jesus' day. The wines then were natural and necessary for survival in an agriculturally-driven society like ancient Israel. Second, not all wines were fermented therefore, not all

wines contained alcohol. Indeed, even the ones that did contain low amounts of alcohol were almost always diluted with many parts water so that no real intoxicating properties were potent enough to get one drunk. If people did get drunk—and the Bible is clear that they did—it was because they purposely mixed the weak wines for that specific purpose.

Finally, the best wines were the freshly produced drinks straight from the grapes. Nothing was more refreshing to the ancients than a cup of freshly squeezed grape juice. And, we have every reason to believe that this is precisely what Jesus gave the guests that day—a sweet, fresh beverage which obviously contained no decay or toxins that fermentation would create.

The miracle Jesus performed was the perfect lesson for the Jews then and for us now. The new wine of the gospel was the best! God was providing it through Jesus!

*What took months to produce, Jesus created with not so much as a word.*





## II. The Second Sign is Jesus Cleansing the Temple (vv. 13-25)

Jesus cleansing the temple is not categorized as a miracle. However, that it is a sign in some sense is clear from the request the Jews made of Jesus upon His driving out the money changers and overturning the tables: “What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?” (v. 18). Just as the new wine Jesus created represented the fresh satisfying drink God provides in contrast to the emptiness of Judaism, so the cleansing of the temple showed God’s total dissatisfaction with the ceremonies and rituals religion had become.

### Reflection Connection

*John records the cleansing of the temple at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry whereas the other gospel writers record the cleansing at the end of His ministry. Do you think this is a contradiction? Why or why not?*

Before looking more closely at this section, it should be pointed out that unlike the other gospel writers who place the cleansing of the temple at the end of Jesus’ ministry, John places the cleansing at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (cp. Matt. 21:12; Mark 11:15). Some think Jesus cleansed the temple twice. It seems better, however, to note John’s irregular chronology instead. In other words, John focused more on teachings and personal conversations with individuals than did Matthew or Mark, who were more concerned with chronology. It should not surprise us therefore, if the chronology is out of order. An Old Testament example of irregular chronology is the book of Jeremiah.

There are three lessons we can easily observe from Jesus’ cleansing of the temple. *First, the cleansing of the temple demonstrated the ruinous condition of religion.* Jesus was not against the temple. In fact, He purposely quoted Scripture about the true nature of the temple being a “House of prayer” (Isa. 56:7; cp. Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17). Even more, in this passage, Jesus explicitly laments that the Jewish religious leaders had corrupted His Father’s house: “make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise” (v. 16).

### Reflection Connection

*Does the fact that Jesus cleansed the temple mean that God no longer has any purpose for the Jewish people? Explain.*

Religion cannot possibly be pleasing to God for the simple reason religion is, at its heart, things people personally do. It is about our actions, our rituals—us. Thus, religion has a built-in magnetism to elevate human works over the glory and grace of God. It focuses horizontally—person to person—rather than vertically—person to God. As this text amply demonstrates, do not be mistaken: *No one had so corrupted religion like the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day.* The one sure lesson we learn from this passage is the utter dissatisfaction our Lord has for empty ritual.

*Second, we learn the restored craving for relationship with God that Jesus desires for each of us.* What was missing in the worshipers as they came to the temple was pleasure in their relationship to God. Being God’s chosen people was little more than a cause for human pride. Even worse, they used their status as the “chosen” to bar others from knowing God in the Old Testament. They tended to see God as loving them and hating others.

Again, this was empty ritual. Just because one calls one’s self by the name of “Christian” does not mean one is a Christian. Being a Christian means one is in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The Jewish people refused such a relationship. The question each of us must decide is: Do we refuse the relationship as well?

*Third, the cleansing of the temple demonstrates the remarkable cost of redemption* Jesus said: “Destroy the temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (v. 19). Of



course, the religious leaders had no clue Jesus spoke of His death and subsequent resurrection (v. 21). The price paid would be extravagant. The Son of God would die a cruel death on a Roman cross for the sins of the world (cp. 3:16).

The radical actions Jesus took as He overturned tables, made a whip, and ran the animals out of the temple, parallels the radical, remarkable cost He would later pay for the redemption of even His enemies. Thus, the cleansing of the temple stands as an implicit sign that Jesus is Savior of the world.

### Golden Greek Nugget

The term translated “sign” which describes the works of Jesus, is the one preferred by the Apostle John over “power” or “wonder.” The word means “to point toward.” We find in chapter one, John the Baptist pointing his own disciples toward Jesus as the Lamb of God. Leaving John’s witness about Him, Jesus now points to Himself, bearing personal witness that He is the Son of God. As the gospel unfolds, there will be seven signs which manifest His glory and prove His deity (cp. 20:30).

### Wrap Up

*The Gospel of John is the clear account of the unsearchable, inexhaustible love of God. Jesus is seen at His ministry’s debut to be Savior of the World. We see this through both the new wine He created, and the old worship He condemned.*

*The real question is whether you accept Jesus as your own personal Savior today. You may delay answering the question but you cannot delete it. You can avoid it but not abrogate it. What is your answer? Is Jesus Christ your personal Savior?*

