

John 2: Miracle at Cana 02-07-16 PM

John tells us in the end of his book that the signs of the book are what convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In chapter two we find the first of these signs: turning water to wine.

Is this the first miracle Jesus performed, or is it the first miracle that John is enumerating for us? The language John uses when he says “beginning of signs” could indicate either. Let us consider though that John states Jesus performed miracles in Jerusalem after this, but before the “second” sign: John 2:23 *Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did.*

John then calls the sign of the official (in chapter four) the second sign. Therefore, the most likely conclusion is that John’s enumeration is not chronological, but for the purpose of the book. Perhaps the significance is meant for us to begin our own count of miracles. Once we do so, we find the following:

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| 1. Turning Wine into Water | - John 2:1-11 |
| 2. Healing of the official’s son | - John 4:46-54 |
| 3. Causing the lame man to walk | - John 5:1-8 |
| 4. Feeding the 5000 | - John 6:5-13 |
| 5. Walking on Water | - John 6:15-21 |
| 6. Healing the blind man | - John 9:1-7 |
| 7. Raising Lazarus from the dead | - John 11 |
| 8. The Resurrection of Christ | - John 20:1-27 |

Eight miracles are recorded. Why not the seven we were expecting? Perhaps we ought to consider that the first seven were performed by Jesus Christ (and we already have been told that the signs testify themselves of Christ), but the last one was performed by the Father (Acts 2:32, Acts 3:15, Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 6:14).

So in fact we have seven miracles performed by Christ, fitting nicely into our pattern. We might wonder why we do not call certain other events in the Gospel “signs”? Some advents (such as Jesus discerning hearts, God speaking from heaven) are not included as “wonders”; John does not call them such. Consider that in 2:11 the Cana miracles is identified as the first, and in 4:54 this is identified as the second; in between these passages Jesus discerns hearts in 2:24 and 4:16-18, but John does not consider them the second and third signs.

Let us return to the water and wine. The stone basins are identified being used for ceremonial washing. Similar stone basins are found in archaeological surveys in the Middle East today. There is no water in them, so we wonder if they have indeed already been used. Such use would likely occur at a wedding, considering the tradition of the rabbis:

Mark 7:2-3 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.

So this action is likely to have occurred at the wedding, a feast which sometimes lasted several days. There is no specific record of whether the water itself became ceremonially “unclean” after being used, but it would seem that at least some stigma might remain with it. Leviticus 11:34 suggests that water touched by something unclean became unclean.

John said that the significance of the miracles was to prove one of two things: Jesus is the Christ (Savior), or Jesus is God. The symbolism here is rather clear; from what was common, came something extraordinary. If the water from those vessels was symbolically unclean itself, the symbolism becomes even more pronounced: from what was unclean came something extraordinary. This miracle is also the second of the seven waters of John. This water is a metaphor for the spiritual transformation that occurs in the life of a believer through Christ.

One last thought: was Jesus authorizing the use of alcohol by this miracle? We ought to consider that the word for wine in Greek (“oinos”) refers to a number of beverages, ranging in their alcoholic content. Nothing in the wording tells us if this is alcoholic or not; we are left to the context to discern the beverage’s nature. The context of a wedding feast causes us to ask: if the wedding guests were concerned about being ceremonially clean for the wedding, is it likely they would then defile themselves with strong drink?

Conclusion: Jesus has come to change us from unclean to perfect. As Paul says in Philippians 3:20 *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; **who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself**”.*