

This seems like a strange start to Jesus' ministry—his first miracle
Why didn't he heal someone or right an injustice?
And then there is that apparent rebuke to his mother because his time has not come
Last, but not least, is the amount of wine created
6 stone jars, holding 20-30 gallons each = 120-180 gallons of wine—that's a lot of wine!

A Jewish wedding was a significant celebration

For a culture with a huge emphasis on hospitality, it was particularly evident in a wedding
This is a village wedding feast and everyone would be invited
In a culture of poverty and hard work, wedding feasts were a great celebration of life
Looking at texts outside of Scripture, Mary was likely a sister of the bridegroom's mother
Possibly the bridegroom is John, whose mother is Salome, Mary's sister
Making it more obvious that Mary would speak up when the wine ran out
For wine to run out was devastating—it was a social disaster and disgrace causing great shame
It could even be seen as a sign of bad luck for the couple
And shame that they would carry for a long time
So Mary comes to Jesus and tells him that they have no more wine

To me, Jesus' response is surprising—

"Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."

It sounds like a rebuke because she is out of line is asking him to do something

But she simply turns and says to the servants, *"Do whatever he tells you."*

I wonder if it isn't more that the request surprised Jesus

He isn't ready to go public with his ministry

He knows that when he does, the crowds won't let him rest

But in my experience, that is just like God

I am frequently surprised by God's timing as well as by what I'm to do

The need is now and God shows great compassion on the family

God cares about their shame and that it goes all right for people

While Jesus wasn't anticipating this, he says yes and meets the need

Mary knows her son and is confident in his ability to meet the need—*"Do whatever he tells you."*

There were 6 stone water jars nearby—holding 20-30 gallons each

Remember that John is writing this Gospel for the Greeks, so he explains why the jars are there

They are needed for the Jewish rites of purification

Water was needed for 2 purposes

1. Cleansing the feet after walking with open sandals on dusty or muddy roads

2. Handwashing—Jews washed hands before a meal and between each course

There was even a particular way that the hands were washed

So large stone water jars stood ready—without them guests would be unclean

Jesus says to fill the jars with water, which they did

When the chief steward (or head waiter) tasted it and found out it was excellent wine

He told the bridegroom that he had saved the best wine for last

As we saw in the 1st chapter of John, this book speaks to both Jews and Greeks

For the Jews—there were 6 water jars

7 is a number that is complete and perfect according to the Jews

6 is a number which is unfinished and imperfect

The 6 water jars stand for all the imperfections of the Jewish law
Jesus came to do away with the imperfections of the law
He replaced the law with the new wine of the gospel of his grace and love
The other 3 gospels all tell about putting new wine in fresh wineskins
This is a sign that God is doing a new thing from within the old Jewish system
God is bringing purification to Israel and the world in a whole new way
This new grace way of God is more than enough—abundant for every one

For the Greeks—they had a similar story¹

Dionysos was the Greek god of wine

At a festival of Thyia, priests take 3 empty kettles into the sanctuary of Dionysos

Done in view of the public and the doors are sealed

The next day the seals are examined as unbroken, before going inside

When they enter, the kettles are full of wine

John is saying to them—You have your stories and legends about your gods

This Jesus is the real thing—Jesus can turn the water into wine

For both the Jews and the Greeks—this Jesus is the real thing

The imperfections of Jewish law and Greek mythology are made perfect in God's grace

Jesus has come to show them the real God who is full of love, grace, and power

This story also speaks of transformation—both of the water to wine, but also of our lives

Through Jesus, there is real transformation in all of us—we are changed and made new

Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians,

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! 2 Corinthians 5:17 NRSV

John is writing this gospel some 30-70 years after Jesus' death and resurrection

He's had time to mull over all these stories and memories—they have taken on new significance

John remembers life with Jesus—wherever he went and when he encountered people

It was like the water turning to wine—lives changed and were transformed

The amount of wine that Jesus made was immense—120-180 gallons of wine—600-900 bottles of wine

The transformation and grace of Jesus is always plentiful

We often hear the message of scarcity and lack—but the miracle of God is that there is plenty

Story of Elisha and widow and sons with huge debt—fill and sell oil which never ran out

This huge amount of wine is an invitation to live into the abundance of God

“You have kept the good wine until now”—in God, not only is it enough, but it is good!

Even when things have gone poorly and we make bad choices, the transformation is always good

There are ups and downs, but overall, the journey with God gets better and better

John's picture of Logos and of Jesus has been growing as we move from chapter 1 to 2 of John

John is introducing us to this *“Logos became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14*

With this “sign” of the water turning to wine, Jesus revealed his glory and the disciples believed

¹ William Barclay, *The Gospel of John, Volume 1, Revised Edition*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975, p. 104