

Lesson 3 Notes

John 2

Focus Verse

"What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him." (John 2:11)

Outline

- Jesus Displays His Power – John 2:1-12
- Jesus Displays His Authority – John 2:13-17
- Jesus Displays His Divinity – John 2:18-25

Engage

At some point and to varying degrees, everyone desires transformation. We often seek a better version of ourselves or some sort of upgrade—a new home, more education, fresh coat of paint, new city, job promotion, or even maturity as the years pass. While any of these may be good, the rejuvenation eventually recedes into the everyday. We yearn for more. **The transformation this world offers yields only partial refreshment and momentary excitement.**¹

In the opening days of Jesus's public ministry, He attracted followers and offered evidence of His majesty. The Lord began to share His heavenly perspective with the world. At a wedding in Cana, in the temple courts of Jerusalem, and through His encounters with fellow Jews, Jesus redefined transformation. **Only the spiritual regeneration Jesus provides can bring lasting change. Jesus wields transforming authority. He desires and has the power to change His people from the inside out.**

1. **Worldly treasure:** Matthew 6:19-21

✦ Jesus Displays His Power – John 2:1-12

Jesus performed His first sign soon after gathering His first disciples.¹ **This recorded miracle took place at a wedding and was the first of many signs to point to His authority, divinity, and regenerating power.**

Wedding at Cana – 2:1-5

The Setting – 2:1-2

Jesus had just recruited Nathanael, Philip, and Peter to follow Him. Additionally, two of John the Baptist's former disciples, Andrew and likely John (this Gospel's writer), left their fishing

1. **First disciples:** John 1:35-51

nets to follow Jesus. **The newly formed group traveled together to a wedding in Cana, a village near Jesus's hometown of Nazareth.**

In Jewish culture, weddings presented a time of joyful fellowship. The celebration typically consisted of events lasting an entire week or more. **The bride and groom were treated like a king and queen. A wedding provided respite from days of hard work, poverty, and Roman oppression.**

The Problem – 2:3-4

This wedding, likely that of a relative or family friend, involved Jesus's mother, Mary. **The scene opens with Mary scrambling to find a solution to a critical need—a shortage of wine that would have humiliated the hosts of such a festive occasion.** Although drunkenness has always been a sin,² wine was considered essential at weddings and other important celebrations. **In ancient times, wine was often a regular part of daily life.**

In desperation, Mary turned to the One she trusted most to find a solution. She simply approached Jesus and stated her problem: "They have no more wine." Because Mary's husband is not mentioned, she may have been a widow at this time. **She would naturally turn to her eldest son for help.**

Luke's Gospel makes it clear that Mary knew Jesus's true identity since before He was born.³ Had Mary heard the pronouncements of John the Baptist?⁴ Did she think it was time for Jesus to reveal Himself to the world? **Or did she simply want more wine for the wedding guests?**

Jesus gently, firmly, and succinctly replied to Mary's request. Consider three noteworthy points in His response:

"Woman"

Jesus respectfully addressed His mother in the same manner He would from the cross, the only other time Mary appears in this Gospel.⁵ **Using "woman" as a common expression, Jesus moved Mary to see Him no longer as the son of her flesh but as Lord of her life. Mary's relationship with Jesus would become even more intimate through faith in Him as her Savior and Lord.**

"Why do you involve me?"

Like the term "woman," this phrase should not be considered discourteous. Rather, **Jesus understood the work His Father sent Him to do. While His mother sought a solution to a practical problem, Jesus focused on an eternal timeline. Jesus's words reveal that He and His mother had different primary concerns.**

"My hour has not yet come."

Jesus understood that He came into this world to accomplish His Father's purpose.⁶ By divine omniscience, Jesus knew everything His Father planned long before He entered the world. Whenever Jesus spoke of His "hour," He referred to the cross.⁷ Throughout His ministry, Mary and others desired for Jesus to reveal Himself more broadly and urgently as the Messiah. However,

2. **Drunkenness:** Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35; Isaiah 5:11, 22; Habakkuk 2:5, 15

3. **Jesus's identity:** Luke 1:35-56; 2:1-52

4. **Proclamation of the Messiah:** John 1:32-34

5. **"Woman":** John 19:26

6. **Jesus's purpose:** Luke 2:41-49; John 1:1-5; 17:1-5

7. **"Hour" of the cross:** John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1

Jesus's "hour" would not come until He entered Jerusalem as King and Messiah, riding on a donkey and fulfilling prophecy.⁸ Though at the point of Mary's request Jesus had not yet offered signs of His authority, He offered many before His "hour" on the cross.

Jesus's "hour" would overturn expectations of the Messiah as a conquering king. Jesus's path to His eternal throne would instead include suffering and death. The Lamb of God must die and rise again to defeat death and provide salvation for God's people.⁹ Everything Jesus did during His earthly life pointed toward the eternal impact of His saving act on behalf of humanity.

A Mother's Response – 2:5

With trust in her son and Lord, Mary instructed the wedding servants, "Do whatever he tells you." In faith, Mary demonstrated the appropriate response to Jesus's absolute authority—obedience. Mary's example continues to speak to us today.

The One who transforms hearts of stone to love and obey God would regenerate ordinary water into fine wine. God is in the business of transformation.

Water to Wine – 2:6-10

The Water – 2:6-8

Nearby stood six stone jars, each with the capacity of 20-30 gallons (75-115 liters). These jars held water for the traditional ceremonial cleansing of hands, feet, and household objects. Jewish tradition rather than God's law dictated this cleansing ritual. Perhaps these now empty jars supplied water for a ritual within the wedding ceremony. ➤

The servants obeyed Jesus and filled the jars to the brim with water. Next they drew a sample from the vessels to take to the banquet master. God positioned these servants as eyewitnesses to Jesus's transformational power. Scripture does not tell us whether these servants knew about Jesus or His identity as the Messiah. The Lord accomplishes extraordinary work through ordinary people and ordinary things. !

The Wine – 2:9-10

Jesus transformed the water within the stone jars into new wine. Jesus, who was with the Father "in the beginning" when the heavens and earth came into being,¹⁰ summoned His divine, creative power to provide more than enough wine for this wedding feast. Jesus's generous heart gave more than Mary had asked. The One who transforms hearts of stone to love and obey God would regenerate ordinary water into fine wine. God is in the business of transformation.

The banquet master testified to the excellence of the wine. He marveled that the best wine would be served at this point in the festivities. Typically hosts served lesser quality wine when their guests' palates were dulled. In Jesus, God offers the world His best—and with His perfect timing. !

8. Triumphant entry: Zechariah 9:9; John 12:12-16

9. Salvation: John 3:16

10. In the beginning: Genesis 1; John 1:1-3

Jesus's Miraculous Signs in John's Gospel

- Turned water into wine – 2:1-11
- Healed royal official's son – 4:46-54
- Healed paralyzed man – 5:1-15
- Fed 5,000 – 6:1-14
- Walked on water – 6:16-21
- Healed blind man – 9:1-41
- Raised Lazarus – 11:1-44
- Resurrected – 20:1-29

(Scholars differ regarding the numbering of the signs. Some, for example, do not count Jesus's walking on water but do count the resurrection as the seventh and pinnacle of all the other signs.)

The Signs of His Time – 2:11-12

Signs – 2:11

Jesus's transformation of water into wine at the wedding in Cana presented the first of countless miracles He would perform throughout His public ministry. **In his Gospel, John refers to Jesus's miracles as "signs" designed to reveal Him as the Messiah.**¹¹ Jesus came to earth to do more than heal the sick, multiply food, and give sight to the blind. He intended for His miracles of compassion to achieve a higher purpose. They were "signs" specifically meant to lead people to believe in Him.¹² Jesus offered visible and tangible expressions of His divine authority.

Jesus's first miracle occurred at a wedding. **The context of this sign hints at the great wedding feast to come on a glorious day in the future.** Jesus will return to establish the new heavens and new earth. **Jesus the Bridegroom will be united, eternally and in glory, with His bride—His people, His Church.**¹³

Moving On – 2:12

Jesus and His followers soon left Cana for the town of Capernaum, about 16 miles (26 km) away, which would serve as the base of Jesus's ministry in Galilee. **From there, the group traveled to Jerusalem where Jesus would make His first rightful claim to His authority over His temple and His people.** Jesus started His public ministry with a quiet display of His transformative power. **Jesus's trip into Jerusalem to celebrate Passover¹⁴ brought public confrontation and God-ordained conversations as He carried out His Father's plan. The faith of Jesus's mother, brothers, and disciples would grow as they followed and abided in Him.**

11. **Signs of the Messiah:** Isaiah 25:4-8; Jeremiah 31:11-12; Joel 2:24-28; 3:18; Amos 9:13

12. **Signs:** John 20:30-31

13. **Wedding supper:** Matthew 22:1-14; Revelation 19:7-9; 21:9

14. **Jesus's trip into Jerusalem:** John 2:13-4:54



Jesus Displays His Authority – John 2:13-17

Jesus and His followers moved from a wedding in Cana to Passover in Jerusalem—from **one glorious celebration and reflection of God’s relationship with His people to another.** **Passover offered a sacred remembrance of God’s miraculous deliverance of His people from bondage and slavery in Egypt.**

Passover in Jerusalem – 2:13-14

Passover was one of three annual Jewish festivals that required the presence of Jewish males aged 12 years and older.¹⁵ Passover became tied to the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread that immediately followed. While those who did not live near Jerusalem were excused from this obligation, many traveled from far away to celebrate. **The people revered the Jerusalem temple as a holy place symbolizing God’s presence and pledge to dwell with His people.**¹⁶

The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which followed Passover, required sacrifices of bulls, lambs, goats, or doves depending on the worshiper’s financial resources. **These sacrifices provided God’s way for His people to enter a restored relationship with Him.** **Like the Passover lamb, these sacrifices foreshadowed the perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed for the sins of the world.**

The **outer court** of the temple, known as the Court of the Gentiles, became a place of commerce. **This court was the only place of the temple open to non-Jews.** Overflowing with merchants, noise, and greed, this holy ground had been turned into a market and impeded God’s intended purpose for the temple. **A place designed for welcome, worship, and serenity turned into a bustling marketplace that distracted visitors from focusing on God.**

Clearing the Temple – 2:15-16

With justifiable anger, Jesus made a whip out of cords and drove out the money changers and livestock. **“Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!”** With His purifying whip and authoritative words, Jesus transformed this sacred place, at least for this moment.

The other Gospel writers include another record of Jesus clearing the temple the week prior to His crucifixion. **Sin never escapes the Lord’s notice.** **In His second encounter, Jesus used even stronger language to confront corruption: “My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’”**¹⁷

Jesus’s reference to the temple as “my Father’s house” and “my house” clearly stood as **messianic claims.** Both times Jesus cleared the temple, **He demonstrated His divine authority to transform—like turning water into wine.** These events also point to the Messiah and the end times. **Jesus claimed authority over the place considered the most sacred spot on the earth for a Jew. Ultimately, the final clearing and cleansing of the Lord’s temple—His people—will take place on the day of judgment.**¹⁸ ➤

15. **Festivals:** Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16

16. **God’s dwelling:** Exodus 25:8

17. **Second temple cleansing:** Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48

18. **Judgment day:** Malachi 3:1-4

Fulfilling Prophecy – 2:17

Every day the disciples spent with their Lord brought them more revelation of His perfect nature. Here at God's temple, they witnessed Jesus's burning desire to honor His Father and allow both Jews and Gentiles to enter His presence. Before their eyes, Psalm 69:9 came alive: "Zeal for your house consumes me." Through moments like this, the roots of the disciples' faith grew deeper. As you spend time with Jesus in His Word, will you draw closer to Him? Take to heart the perfect attributes of Jesus's character, will, and zeal for you, His people, and His Father.

✦ Jesus Displays His Divinity – John 2:18-25

Jesus issued a clear statement of His divine authority when He boldly drove out and admonished the merchants in the temple courts. Such a revelation demands a response. Jesus invited scrutiny as He boldly launched His confrontation of Israel's religious leaders. Certainly God's own Son, the Sovereign Lord of eternity, was fit for this challenge.

Jesus's Purpose – 2:18-22

The Jews' Challenge – 2:18

The authority Jesus visibly demonstrated quickly brought questions from the religious leaders who likely blessed and benefited from the temple court commerce. Blind to the fact that they stood face-to-face with God's Son, "the Jews" asked a logical question: "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" These religious experts missed the fact that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of Zechariah and Malachi, who promised the Messiah would sweep the temple clean.¹⁹ They failed to ask, "Could this be the Messiah?"

Jesus's Response – 2:19

Throughout Jesus's ministry, people constantly questioned the source of His authority. Often the religious leaders tried to trap Jesus in error or self-incrimination. Jesus's wise answers and the shrewd questions He returned to His detractors always probed beneath the surface. With intentionality, Jesus exposed people's motives and sin as well as His own identity. Jesus offered a profound answer to their question: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

Jesus's Meaning – 2:20-22

The questioners focused only on the magnificent structure in front of them. How could the temple that took a lifetime to build be destroyed, much less rebuilt in three days? Later at His trial and crucifixion, Jesus's enemies twisted His words to falsely accuse Him.²⁰

The people at the temple courts that day did not understand the truth that would soon become clear to Jesus's disciples. His words represented God's good news, the greatest sign of all. Death would be defeated. Jesus, the true Temple and presence of God, conquered sin and death and rose from the grave. Through faith in Jesus, God "rebuilds" people who are dead in their sin, transforming them to enjoy God's glorious presence in this life and forever.

19. Cleansed temple: Zechariah 14:20-21; Malachi 3:1-15

20. Twisted words: Matthew 26:60-61; 27:40

Transformed into New Life

The Doctrine of Regeneration

God created human beings for an eternal relationship with Him. However, beginning in the garden, sin fractured that sacred bond with our Father and Creator.¹ Because God is completely holy and perfectly righteous,² sin is incompatible with His presence.³ In our natural sinful state, we are like a heart that is not beating—dead to God. **We can do nothing to revive ourselves and restore our relationship with Him.** No noble act, payment, right thinking, or self-help program will do what only God can do.⁴

Only God regenerates. In mercy and love, God sent His Son to die on the cross and pay sin's penalty for us.⁵ **Through faith in who Jesus is and what He did, the Holy Spirit regenerates those dead in sin to life everlasting.** God brings new, eternal life to those born again as only He can. Like the empty jars at a wedding in Cana or the cleansed temple court in Jerusalem, Jesus regenerates a dead heart and a meaningless, empty life into one filled with peace, joy, celebration, worship, and a renewed, eternal relationship with Him.

A dead heart cannot turn to Jesus for salvation. **Without the Spirit's regeneration and creation of spiritual life within, you will not seek God or recognize the depth of your sin.**⁶ Your feeble attempts to clean up your life and be a better person can never satisfy God's righteous standard.

Only God can spark spiritual life and regenerate a dead heart. The Holy Spirit awakens us to new hope and vitality. Jesus died so we do not remain dead in our sin. God raised Jesus from the dead so He could raise you from sin and death to live a vibrant new life in His power.⁷ **Jesus's life-giving power regenerates dead hearts with new life.**⁸

1. **Sin's damage:** Genesis 3; Ephesians 2:1-6
2. **God's holiness:** Isaiah 6:1-6
3. **Incompatibility with sin:** Psalm 5:4
4. **No human effort:** Ephesians 2:8-9
5. **Jesus died for us:** John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 8:32
6. **Dead in sin:** Romans 3:10-18
7. **New life:** Romans 6:1-14
8. **Jesus's regenerating power:** John 3:6-7; 4:10; 5:24

The Greek word *naos* used here means “temple.” Jesus spoke of His own body as the temple. But He also knew the Jewish temple these people so admired would be destroyed within a generation. The symbolism of the temple pointed to Jesus. **God's glory filled the Most Holy Place until the time of Israel's exile.**²¹ **Now God's glory stood present among them and before them in Jesus.** After Jesus died, rose, and ascended into heaven, the Jerusalem temple became obsolete.²² **Jesus, God's true Temple, fulfilled everything the temple foreshadowed.**

The truth about Jesus would unfold throughout His earthly ministry—Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.²³ Jesus would demonstrate that He came to earth as the one, true God

21. **God's glory:** Exodus 40:34-35; 2 Chronicles 7:1-3; Ezekiel 10
22. **Temple obsolete:** Hebrews 8:1-6
23. **The way:** John 14:6-7

to give life and light to all who believe in Him. Everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ shares in His victory. As man, Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit.²⁴ Today the Holy Spirit lives in God's people—all who have received Jesus as Lord and Savior—and our bodies are His temple.²⁵ New life flows through Jesus, the giver of life.

More to Come – 2:23-25

Jesus's Signs – 2:23

Though the full revelation of Jesus's glory awaited the cross, He revealed His true identity through powerful signs and authoritative words. While in Jerusalem, Jesus offered many signs as He invited people to believe in Him. **Jesus fulfilled His purpose as people in Jerusalem believed in His name.**

Jesus's Scrutiny – 2:24-25

With effortless accuracy, Jesus knows the absolute truth about every human heart. As crowds gathered and word of His miracles spread, Jesus discerned what human statistics cannot measure. **Jesus wisely determined the scope, target, and timing of what He revealed about Himself.** He knew the Jerusalem throngs sought only the spectacular and did not recognize His unique identity. Jesus gradually revealed His message and mission to a carefully chosen and growing circle of disciples. Still, the good news was on the move, by God's design and according to His plan.

Jesus disclosed who He was in timely and divinely orchestrated increments. As His public ministry began, hints of His greatness emerged. Everywhere Jesus went and through everything He did, His power and purpose surfaced. **Jesus wields transforming authority.** His power cannot be suppressed and stands available to all who place their faith in Jesus.

✦ Take to Heart

Hold Fast

Jesus began His public ministry with a quiet miracle at a wedding in Cana. He transformed ordinary water stored in stone jars designed for ceremonial cleansing into fine wine. **Similarly, sinful humans cannot be purified or made new through external religious ceremonies but only through the miracle of Jesus's transforming power and authority.** Jesus then boldly entered and cleansed the Jerusalem temple of the profiteering commerce that polluted God's intended purpose. **Jesus came to bring a solution to sin's corruption and purify human hearts to know and honor God as He intended.** As He performed miraculous signs to gathering crowds in Jerusalem, **Jesus discerned their shallow interest and withheld truth they would not accept.** **Jesus revealed His transforming power to the world to fulfill God's plan.**

24. The Holy Spirit in Jesus: John 3:34; Luke 4:1, 14, 18

25. Temple of the Spirit: Luke 11:13; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:16

Jesus overturns convention and expectation. He levels the field in a world where people seek to get ahead. He honors and serves the humble, lowly, and downtrodden. He offers freedom from the power and propensity to sin. **In and through Jesus, we learn to see others as God's children to love and serve.** The transformation He brings and that we experience rises as our spiritual act of worship back to Him.²⁶

Apply It

Mary turned to Jesus when a crisis dampened the joy of wedding festivities. Jesus turned a social predicament, an inadequate supply of wine, into a miraculous expression of His regenerating power. Jesus provided relief, joy, and evidence of His compassionate heart. The ordinary became extraordinary. The miraculous overtook the mundane. A troubled mother experienced relief and help from her earthly son who was truly God's Son. God sparked new life in water confined in jars designed to provide cleansing only God can accomplish. Jesus instituted a new way. How have you experienced the internal transformation only God can produce? **Can you sense the new life the Holy Spirit generates within you?** In what ways have you seen God revive and change your thinking, priorities, and actions as you look to Jesus as your source of hope? **Like Mary, will you present your needs to Jesus and trust Him to supply what only He can provide?** **Jesus works through the ordinary moments of life to reveal His extraordinary power and authority.** !

The livestock market and money exchange at the temple courts benefited a few at the expense of many. **By stark contrast, Jesus came to earth at His expense for the good of all.** He lived with and died for fallen, sinful humankind. He exposed evil and demonstrated righteousness. Jesus's broken body hung on the cross, but He rose victorious over death. Jesus offered Himself as the required atoning sacrifice for all humankind. Because of Jesus, we enjoy a renewed relationship with God Himself. **What habit or lifestyle choice would Jesus overturn in your life? Has a festering sin or lingering distraction lured you from God?** How might you, intentionally or unintentionally, take advantage of others for your personal benefit? **Jesus longs to cleanse you from anything that dishonors God.** His regenerating power compassionately reveals sin and offers power to yield to Him in obedience. How will you respond this week to Jesus's gracious intervention to rescue you from sin? He will transform you from the inside out.

God accurately assesses the reality within your heart. With divine omniscience, God searches and knows the undeniable bottom line of who you are and how you think. He knows what you seek and why. He recognizes what you understand and what confuses you. He discerns the authority exerting the most power over you and your daily choices. While God's unlimited knowledge of our inmost being can be daunting, this fact also brings comfort. **God also knows the right way and perfect timing to reveal truth so we can hear and understand.** **Jesus offers transforming power to the lives of those who follow, love, and worship Him.** How have you responded to Jesus's offer? **What excuses hold you back from fully trusting Jesus?** Will you ask God to help you see and believe all He has revealed to you through His Word? What keeps you from the Savior who loves you and longs for relationship with you?

26. Living sacrifice: Romans 12:1-2