

### New Beginnings

**Drawing Near:** “Father, will You enable us by the Holy Spirit to see Your glory in Jesus as we walk with Him through His first week of public ministry? Help us to *observe, interpret* and *apply* to our own lifestyle His awe-inspiring way... Amen.”

At the close of chapter one Jesus had five believing men who were His disciples. They did not immediately “forsake all and follow Him” but they had trusted Him. In the three years to come each new day and event would bring marvels that were difficult for them to understand. In chapter two alone John records several wonderful revelations of Jesus Christ.

#### Study Skill: Context

*One of the most important principles in handling the Word of God properly is to interpret Scripture in light of its context. Observing individual verses in consideration to surrounding text and chapters will better enhance our ability to interpret Scripture accurately. We will practice this skill in the passage we are about to study.*

1. Briefly review verses 19-51 of chapter one, making note of the time designations in verses 29, 35 and 43. We understand the events of this passage to be the eyewitness account of the beginnings of the first momentous week of Jesus’ public ministry by John the author.
  - a. How many days does chapter one (verses 19-51) cover?
  - b. Observe the opening words in verse one of chapter two. How do you think the “third” day relates to the previous days John described in chapter one? (Consider the entire context of John 1:19 through 2:11 and note the fact that it was a three-day journey from Bethany to Cana.)
2. **Locate** the village of Cana on the map. **Read John 2:1-11** to get an overall view of the first *sign* Jesus performed while at a wedding celebration. Imagine you are there and looking on. Make a list of all those mentioned as being present. Place an (\*) by those guests who knew a supernatural event had taken place.

Good hospitality at a wedding celebration or “marriage feast” in the Holy Land was a serious matter in the Jewish community. The festivities often lasted a week and each day new guests would appear. This could put considerable financial strain on the bridegroom since it was his responsibility to provide for the guests. To run out of wine at a marriage feast would be a social disgrace that could bring shame and embarrassment to the family for years to come.

It's quite possible that Jesus' mother was more than a guest at this wedding. Female relatives of the bride were often helpers or in charge of the kitchen. This may explain why she took the initiative to do something about the lack of wine.

3. Why do you think Mary approached Jesus with this situation (verse 3)? Keep in mind that no miracles had been performed by Him up to this point.

One might consider Jesus' response to his mother (verse 4) to be perplexing. Re-examine verses 3 and 4 to get a sense of the dynamics. The following points may help you as you interpret this verse.

\**Woman* was a term of respect but not an intimate form of address.

\*The word "time" or "hour" is a significant theme in this gospel. Trace the pattern through the verses that follow (John 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1).

\*Jesus went on to perform His first *sign* but the miracle was performed in a private manner.

4. Upon carefully considering all your observations write out your understanding of verse 4.

5. In what ways does Jesus' mother demonstrate her faith and confidence in Him?

6. Describe in your own words the exciting chain of events that occur in verses 6-10.

7. What Divine attributes of Jesus are on display in this first sign? (Consider John 1:1a; Psalm 33:6a, 9 and John 1:3.)

Carefully read through the passage again. The fact that Jesus attended the wedding speaks well of the importance He places on marriage. When Jesus intervened and changed the water to wine in abundance that far exceeded the immediate need ... still more is revealed to us about His heart and His active involvement in everything concerning us.

8. How does Jesus' loving response speak to the personal need you are facing today?

*Jesus stands at the door of your heart whispering that same message: "There is nothing mundane about your life. I have come to pour My abundant love upon you lavishly. Invite Me into the corridors of your life and let Me show you how I can transform the everyday to the supernatural, how I can give you more blessing than you could hope for and how life in Me can be sweeter than you could ever imagine, and how I have saved the best for last." (1 Corinthians 2:9)*

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9. In verse 11 we are told that Jesus “*revealed His glory*” in the sign He performed at Cana. Describe how this passage illustrates John 1:14.

In each of Jesus’ signs He demonstrates His sufficiency by supernatural ability. Apart from Him, all humankind is inadequate (we fall short). The signs both illustrate and prove He is everything He claims to be... the “Messiah!”

10. What effect did this (His first sign) have on His disciples?

**Read Mark 7:1-9** for an understanding of the ritual purpose of the stone *waterpots* spoken of in John 2:6 ... the kind used by the Jews for *ceremonial washing*. Symbolically, the waterpots allude to spiritual lack or the “falling short” of Judaism. Jesus might have appeared to be challenging Old Covenant practice by setting aside the ritual use of the waterpots but was actually replacing it with the new and better, pointing to the New Covenant. Jesus changed the water of the *law* into the wine of the *gospel*. The first *sign* began a road of conflict that would eventually result in hostile opposition from the governing Jewish hierarchy. We will see this publicly and more passionately expressed in the “cleansing of the temple.”

Examine the “opening act” of Jesus’ public ministry as recorded in **John 2:12-22**. **Read** the account several times. In your mind imagine the full-scale enactment before you... including the words and sounds you would have heard. (Also refer to the note following question 11.)

11. From your observations, list the main facts recorded in verses 12-22.

Note: The *Passover* was one of the most meaningful of the Jewish feast celebrations. It commemorated God’s Divine deliverance of the Jews from Egypt. See Exodus 12:21-28 for background. Accompanying this lesson is a handout providing some history of the temple and a description of how it looked in Jesus’ day.

12. The “cleansing of the temple” was a dramatic and startling act. What do you believe it was that drove Jesus to take such drastic action? See Mark 11:17, John 2:16-17 and Psalm 69:9.

13. What/who would Jesus drive out of your life?

14. It is interesting to note that the Jews did not question the deed itself, but Jesus' right to do it (2:18). If Jesus could prove His authority over the temple why would this be significant to the Jews?
15. In your own words, explain what Jesus meant by His reply, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."
16. Ironically, how do the Jews become the means of bringing about the very sign they were demanding? (See Matthew 27:24-26.)

In this passage there are several Greek words that are translated "temple." Each time John refers to Jesus entering the temple structure, he uses the Greek word *heiron* (2:14, 15). This is an inclusive word and refers to the whole temple complex or structure. In 2:19, 21 Jesus uses *naos*, meaning "holy place" or "sanctuary." This is the word Jesus uses when speaking metaphorically of His own body as a temple.

17. **Read and compare** the passages in the paragraph above. Consider also 1 Corinthians 6:19 and Revelation 21:22. When you imagine these passages as a whole what picture comes to mind?
18. Explain how the "cleansing of the temple" is a *sign* of the "doing away with" or "destruction of" the old order of worship being replaced by the new.

*Meditate on how the fulfillment of this sign will impact Jesus' disciples (2:22).*

19. A variety of other things were taking place during Jesus' visit to Jerusalem at the time of the Jewish Passover. **Read John 2:23-25**. In summary, record your observations.
20. Upon review of John 2:1-25 what specific truths about Jesus, when applied to your present life, render the greatest value toward establishing your own "new beginnings?"

## The Temple of God

The *temple* was designed for God to dwell in and meet with His people so that they could commune and worship Him as Holy God. The origins of this *meeting place* began as the *tent of meeting* or *tabernacle*... after God had given clear instructions to Moses for the assembling of this temporary “tent-like” structure and strict ordinances to follow concerning it.

Later, when King David ruled, it was “in his heart” to build a permanent house or “*dwelling place*” for the Ark of the Covenant where the presence of the Lord was believed to have rested. God’s words were spoken through Nathan the prophet to speak to David regarding his intentions (1 Chronicles 17:4-15). David had been a man of war and had shed much blood before God and so Solomon would become King after David and would be the one to build the temple... during a time of peace. We can read about Solomon’s temple in 1 Kings 6, 7, 8 and 9. This original temple was later destroyed by the Babylonians in the sixth century B.C. It was later rebuilt by Zerubbabel (see Ezra 3; Haggai 1-2; Zechariah 4).

In 19 B.C. Herod the Great began an extensive renovation of the temple that was not completed until 64 A.D. Although it was only half done when Jesus was there, it was breathtaking and in full operation. The Jewish historian Josephus raved that “the exterior of the building wanted nothing that could astound either mind or eye. For, being covered on all sides with massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner up than it radiated so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes, as from the solar rays. To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was overlaid with gold was of purest white.”

*Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*

The temple proper (the Holy Place) was a huge edifice 300 feet wide, long and high, and was surrounded by several courts. The innermost court was open only to Jewish men, the next admitted both Jewish men and women and the outermost court admitted Gentiles as well as Jews. It was here in the outer court (the Court of the Gentiles) that Jesus found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

For the people who came from hundreds of miles away for the Passover celebration, it would be difficult to bring along their animals of sacrifice. They would need to buy them in Jerusalem. Also, since foreign money was brought to give to the temple treasury, it had to be exchanged to shekels for appropriate temple use. There was no reason however, that these transactions could not have taken place outside the temple area. The Court of the Gentiles was a sacred place where Gentiles too could come and worship.

In the book of John we will observe that much of the conflict resulting from Jesus’ miraculous *signs* takes place in and around the temple vicinity.