



# The Great Transformation

## John 2:1-11

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- #1 The Adventurers: Yes a Miracle
- #2 The Traditionalists: Not a Miracle
- #3 The Believers: The Sign

If you want to first study the passage on your own, go to the end for the study questions.

### Intro

## FROM WATER INTO WINE

these superficial interpretations are the very thing which catches the attention of most readers.

The first miracle that Jesus did was to turn water into wine, right there in Cana where He was raised. We are challenged with John's conclusion in verse 11 that this 'sign' manifested Christ's glory. We wonder, though, why would anyone pick a subject so sensitive as this to start off a career of miracles.

Who would paint the picture of the great promised Messiah in this way? John, the Apostle did. John knew Him most intimately. Each of these signs will be hidden away unless their true significance can be found. They are like desert flowers which rest as an invisible seed for years on end. A brief but rare water from heaven interrupts the desert dryness, seeks out the seed and causes flowers with beautiful blossoms to quickly grow up.

**In a like manner, we need to get beyond each of these seven signs of John and discover its meaning. Many refuse to. They don't want to. We will first speak on two superficial perspectives before we take a look at John's real intent.**

#### John 2:1-11, NASB

1 And on the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; 2 and Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the wedding.

3 And when the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus \*said to Him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus \*said to her, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother \*said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

6 Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. 7 Jesus \*said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He \*said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the headwaiter." And they took it to him. 9 And when the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter \*called the bridegroom, 10 and \*said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; you have kept the good wine until now."

11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

# #1 The Adventurers: Yes a Miracle!

Many people read the story in Cana and come away with an observation that does them more harm than good. They conclude it is not wrong to drink for fun. I can imagine that thousands and thousands of individuals have eased their **drinking conscience** simply by reflecting on the event of Jesus turning the water into wine. We should ask ourselves whether we have also joined this circle?

**Party Interpretation**

**Ease of conscience**

**“No Drinking, no fun”**

**Cool Christianity!**

**Why not drugs?!**

**Jesus knew how to party.**

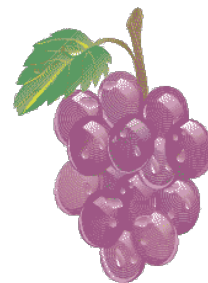
With this interpretation we could find real good support of Jesus at the local high school or college campus. There are so many souls that are oppressed by **“No drinking, no fun”** parents. They think the church has no other business than to steal the vitality of life from them. When one starts hearing the lively stories, the interesting tales, and the ability to meet people in an easier way, it is hard to stay away from the parties. It is very difficult to look cool when your friends know you are ‘clean.’

This is where the story comes to rescue their consciences. Deep in the recesses of their mind, they know that **Christianity was never meant to be so uncool** and stuffy. They have read John 2:1-11. They heard about Jesus turning water into wine and that settles it. And of course, the text can be expanded a bit in its application. Wine is an intoxicating drug. **Another category** is marijuana and other drugs. It is the same thing but only in a different form. They easily conclude that if wine is okay to drink, certainly there is no

problem with the others.

**Jesus knew what ran a party.** The typical wedding feast ran for days. It was a big event, a community event. Any wedding that went dry, went dead. Jesus’ mother knew this. Jesus evidently agreed because He made 180 gallons of wine. That would last them their party just like those dorms that open up the tabs on those big beer kegs! Who cared about the ritualistic purification pots! The party must go on!

And so now, I trust that you can see what makes it so hard to preach on such a chapter. Most people have already developed their own conclusions. The simple minded can go to sleep. They have their life text.



**“Life is made of fun.”**

**“Life is for pleasure.”**

**“I’ll toast to your happiness!”**

## CONCLUSION

This event seems so incongruous to chapter 1 of John. Has Christianity indeed falsely presented Jesus? Is there another side to Him that Christianity tries to hide from others? Not a few conclude this. Unfortunately, these same people never get to see the real point of the story. They only see the wine. They can’t see the sign in the changing of the wine.

**The importance of the message was more important than the risk of misunderstanding. Those that live for their earthly desires have no real interest in heavenly matters. They live for their short bouts of laughter not realizing they will end in an eternal sigh.**

## #2 The Traditionalists: Not a Miracle

This second group lives as if there was no miracle at all. Some might admit to something special happening, but most of them deny that there was any real miracle. They just don't believe it. But John knew what Jesus did. He was there! Let's look at five evidences for a genuine miracle.

### **Argument #1 Jesus just mixed some wine with the water in the pots to make it seem like he turned water into wine.**

But 2:7 clearly states, "Jesus said to them, "Fill the water pots with water." And they filled them up to the brim." There is no way to get around it. There was no room to mix wine in.



### **Argument #2 Jesus' disciples snuck wine in with the water.**

But clearly Jesus disciples had no part in the filling. Jesus asked the servants that His mother had first addressed to do this. Jesus told them to fill the pots with water; His disciples didn't get near those huge pots.

### **Argument #3 The wine wasn't real.**

This is easily dashed because the headmaster, who didn't know what was happening clearly declared, "This wine is good!" It was so good that he called the bridegroom over and said, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; you have kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10). He didn't order this wine. He thought the bridegroom had a trick up His sleeve.

### **Argument #4 Jesus slipped a glass of wine to the banquet organizer to be tasted.**

But no, Jesus didn't touch it. Jesus again spoke to the servants, "And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the headwaiter." And they took it to him" (John 2:8). The servants took it to the headmaster themselves.

### **Argument #5 John just made the story up.**

This is highly impossible. First of all, it was the disciples that were amazed. Later it was His enemies who confessed Jesus did miracles. Lastly, it was the same disciples who followed Jesus even unto death.

Are you convinced that there was no hocus pocus going on here? Jesus really did turn the water into the wine. We can't deny it. We must not pretend Jesus never did this miracle. Although some denominations affected by the prohibition age do not allow members to drink or sell alcoholic beverages, it seems a pretty risky way to define a Christian. After all, Jesus had made wine and was responsible for it to be passed out to many guests over a number of days.



I joined such a 'prohibitionist' church when I was in college. I was glad they finally took this item out of their bylaws. Was it because I wanted to drink? No. Did I drink afterwards? No. Could I? Yes. But the Christian life is not to be looked at upon what goes in or out of the body. Jesus always looked deeper.

Jesus instead would ask, "Why are you taking that drink?" "How important is that drink to you?" One doesn't have to go far to find friends that drink, even Christians. Time permitting, I will later share why I chose not to drink or take drugs.

**Let me summarize where we have gone so far.**

## **Group #1 The Adventurers**

We first introduced a popular superficial understanding of the text. These people don't really care for Jesus or what He said. They are looking for a way to justify what they do with as little guilt as possible. They are only interested in parties and looking cool. That is important to them. They are not thinking about heaven. They don't even know why God sent Jesus into the world. But if He can help them get their parents off their back or relieve their consciences just a bit, He can't be that bad. These people use superficial interpretations to justify their lifestyle. In their heart, they know Jesus has another message from God, but their iPods are tuned into the 'earth' podcast.

## **Group #2 The Traditionalists**

We have also been rather forthright stating that an amazing miracle actually did take place. Many people, especially those in authority, like things neat and nice. They want to manage people without problems. That means, they do not want problem texts! Once we say that people can drink, all sorts of problems crop up. They would like to ignore this text or strip it of its contents. He didn't really turn water into wine. Christians don't do that. These people too, are not very interested in the message of Jesus. They have a tradition and feel secure in it. They don't want anyone to disturb their world. These people lead the dullest Bible studies in the world. They never dare allow the text to speak for itself. They know better, so they believe.

So we have two groups that are not very interested in Jesus' message. They are interested in what they are doing, whether it be fun parties or a parent or pastor in control. They are willing to narrowly interpret the scriptures for their own purpose.

## **#3 The Believers: The Sign**

John had one **purpose in writing John**. He wanted people to meet and believe Christ. We find Jesus was not one that worried what people would think about what he did or did not do. He broke protocol again and again. Many rejected Him for this. He even visited parties. He also disturbed people by speaking against the evil intent of their hearts. He doesn't do this here, but stay through this journey in John, and one will find out that John will start sharing stories about Jesus that show the difference of living by the world's system or by the will of the Father.



Jesus was focusing on what His Father in heaven wanted. This was the life we all are accountable to live. In the end, we will be judged by whether we loved God's kingdom and chose to live His way. It is time for us to think a bit on the third and last point. Why did John describe this event for us?

John who was most acquainted with Jesus and His ministry chose to use only **7 miracles** all through the book. This was the first one. It is called a **sign** rather than a miracle. A sign pointed to something bigger than the event itself. The sign might astonish us as this one did. None of us can turn water into wine. We have a hard enough time trying to understand the molecular structure let alone change it. Everybody during the miracle followed the servants around right until the

bridegroom heard the announcement about the nice wine being served. But the disciples were looking back at Jesus.

They were simply incredulous. We see no fanfare. Jesus didn't get everyone around Him to show off His power. The miracle on the one hand seemed so innocently simple, but when we think of it, our minds are quickly confused.

**Water and wine** are so different. Water might have microorganisms in it, but it is not living. It is not from living sources. Two hydrogen atoms combined with an oxygen atom. Those pots only had water in them. They were specialized vessels. Wine, though, is made from grapes. Grapes live on a vine somewhere at some time. Then they are smashed with someone's feet and strained, stored and allowed to turn to wine. My neighbor once suggested that I take some of my grapes and make wine out of it. He said it would make very good wine. I didn't take him up on it.

They are both liquids but with very different components. Water was dead; wine was alive. Water plain; wine with zest and life. Surely, this miracle brought glory to Jesus as verse 11 says, "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." The sign pointed to a great person. There was something special about Jesus.

The essence of this sign showed that Jesus the Messiah was greater than the Law. The Law was great. It led people closer to God. And yet the Law did not compare to what God would reveal later through the person of Jesus Christ. People might be happy about the Law, but it would run dry. It would be shown insufficient for what everyone knows should happen.

Those that were really looking, would find that God had arranged something better. This miracle proves that God sometimes, and definitely has in this case, leaves the best for the last. We should reject hedonism and traditionalism for the greater things that the Lord has prepared in His beloved Son. If we reject Him, then we reject the most special thing God had prepared for His people. Jesus was not only the 'life of the wedding party' but the Life and Light of the world.

## Application

The point is this. Many people are happy with life as it is. Some tolerate and even use religion. Some disdain it. They call it superficial and hypocritical. Jesus blows these two common life perspectives away by calling them to drop their old images of God and obedience and begin to see that following God is something wholly new and special.

### Group #1 Adventurers = Hedonists

**In a sense he baited us with real life, real meaning, and real purpose.**

For instance, we find that many are looking for pleasure and fun. They just adopt the world's mantra. Jesus challenges them by showing them that they are living with cheap imitations of the real stuff. Sure we might go out, buy drugs and wine and party away. But isn't there more to life than this? Isn't there in space and time someone who threw a curve over the plate that stunned everyone that saw it. Something is greater than wine or the pleasure it gives. Life is more than just what we see on earth.

I suggest that John used Jesus' miracle here to try to give us a glimpse of the glory of Christ. He was not just some religious teacher. He was not just about giving us a better life on earth. Something greater was there. **In a sense John baited us with real life, real meaning and real purpose.** He can and does change lives. He brings together the power, glory and awe of the eternal heavens with the time constraints of earth. Sure, you can go on your way. I know many of you will. You are skeptics of Christianity. You play the game but you are sold to the earth.

- **Pornography** pictures are scanned all over your mind.
- Your **desires** are secretly satiated.
- **Slander** is slashed on your tongue.
- **Jealousy** stains your heart.
- Your **mind** is imprinted with the world.

**They are all cheap imitations.** Jesus has given you this miracle to cause you to awaken you to something that is much more glorious. He wanted you to know that He is not mere religion. If you ignore Christ then you miss all.

## Group #2 Traditionalists

The second group, we have pointed out, will also miss the best if they don't see the glory of Jesus here. Life is not a set of rules. Jesus broke so many laws of man in one quick stroke without touching one thing. He means to break the chains that bind us to the earth's system. Christ takes the power of heaven to interrupt the otherwise steady transmissions from the earth. Life is not religion.

Life is Christ and obeying God's glorious will. Life is not looking good and having control over what you do on earth. Life is knowing God and doing His will. Jesus doesn't like pretend religion. You pretend to be a good Christian but at heart you are just like the world. You go home from church and think the world, eat the world, sleep the world. One day you will die with the world. You need to be transformed.

Right now God has been breaking your old concepts with some surprising new ideas about God and His plan through Christ. You might not fully understand what they are through this passage, but the Spirit is convicting you that He is better, much better. The path of life runs down a narrow alley. You must pursue Christ or your religion will end up like dust in your hands and on your lips.

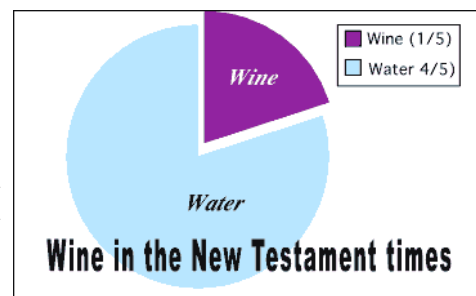
Before closing, allow me to give you my thoughts on drinking or taking drugs for fun. My perspective has been shaped by many different biblical perspectives but influenced by what I have seen in life.

## Perspective on Drinking

You might wonder about my stance of drinking.

### **Drunkenness is sin.**

*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation,...* (*Ephesians 5:18, NASB*). Clearly the scriptures forbid the excess of anything. They speak about the sin of drunkenness. The problem is that drunkenness is a state in which you cannot clearly discern and do God's will. If you are drunk, you cannot focus on what God has for your life.



### **Much evil comes from drinking.**

Early on I decided not to drink because of the evil it does. Where does it do any good? Instead, I see drunken husbands beat up their wives and not even know it in the morning. I see others who get jittery when they don't have that drink.

### **People get addicted. It runs in families .**

Once a person starts drinking, he can easily get caught drinking it for stimulation. Wine in Jesus' day was used in a greatly diluted form much like countries that have no clean water: one part wine for every four-parts water.

### **My close relative was severely hurt.**

I don't drink because my close relative loss most of his leg because of alcoholism. It was an accident that could have been avoided.

**I don't want others to stumble.**

People look at my life and find permission for anything that I do. Ideally, they should look to the scriptures to see what they should do or not do. But man is corrupt and often is acting upon his fleshly desires.

**Christ is much greater than these stimulants.**

If I had to choose one reason I don't drink, this is the greatest reason. I don't drink because I have Jesus. His joy fills my soul a thousand times more than the temporary silliness from alcohol. I don't drink because I don't want to be in any way an excuse for those around me to say that alcohol brought saneness or happiness to my life. I want them to know it is Jesus. Only Jesus. Always Jesus. I don't chase after pleasure, for a greater glory is found in Christ. Because of this I proclaim Christ and declare His glory.

Quality	Imitation	Genuine
Joy	Momentary high	Steady joy in heart
Peace	Temporary amnesia of world	Confident of God's care in all circumstances
Hope	A flash of oblivious to life's consequences	Constant delight in God's love
Love	False friendship (as long as the wine runs)	Genuine friendship (share real lives)

We have presented two common misinterpretations of this passage. Each viewpoint is an excuse for a wicked heart. These people just don't want to repent.

Please put aside your love for the world. It is a cheap imitation. The party is dull. And once it ends, it will evaporate in the vapors of hell. There is a more glorious way. And with the disciples, we believe. We want Jesus. We might not fully know Him, but He has showed us that this world is what we don't want. **We must have Jesus.** He is the link between heaven and earth. His is the Truth, the Way, and the Life. I can't let this moment go by without running after Him with my whole heart.

- *Choose between the crumbs of this earth and the treasures of heaven.*
- *Choose between that which perishes and that which will endure forever.*
- *Choose Christ Jesus who promises eternal life and calls us to reject the cheap imitations that have been slowly deadening its consumers.*

**FROM  
WATER  
INTO  
WINE**

*Bible Study Questions*

*John 2:1-11*

*Questions for Understanding! (Approach)*

- 1) Where did this wedding take place? (1)
- 2) What did Jesus' mother ask of Him? (2:3)
- 3) How did Jesus answer? (2:4)
- 4) How did Jesus' mother respond to Jesus' seeming reluctance to help out? (2:5)
- 5) How many religious ceremonial water pots were there? (2:6) If each pot held 30 gallons, how much water did they hold altogether?
- 6) Read the actual miracle Jesus did in 2:7-10. How did Jesus do this miracle?
- 7) After Jesus did the miracle, what did Jesus do? (2:8)
- 8) Why did the headwaiter call the bridegroom? (2:9-10)
- 9) What did the headwaiter actually say to the bridegroom? (2:10)
- 10) How do we know that this was Jesus' first miracle? (2:11)
- 11) Why do you think he did this? (2:11)
- 12) John does use the word 'miracle' in this gospel. What word is used in its place? (2:11) Note: some versions might add the word 'miraculous' to this word but it is not really there.
- 13) How did His disciples respond to what Jesus did? (2:11)

### *John 2:1-11 Questions for Impact! (Approach)*

1) Jesus' mother told the servants, "Whatever He (Jesus) says to you, do it." (2:5) What does this show you of Jesus' relationship with His mother? Application: Do others that know you well trust you? What things have they asked you to do to show you of this trust?

2) Jesus said, "My hour has not yet come" (2:4). What does 'My hour' refer to? Do a word study of the word 'hour' through John or more simply study (John 17:1). Application: What does God want to do through your life? Write down or update the mission statement for your own life.

3) Does Jesus legitimize drinking or taking drugs by His having turned water into wine? Why or why not? What does the Bible say about getting drunk? (Eph 5:18, 1 Pe 4:1-5)

4) What is the difference between drinking for fun and drinking wine for beverage? (Note: without refrigeration and purification of water, wine was about the only safe beverage. It was greatly diluted, only 1 of 5 parts being wine).

5) Is it wrong to tell people they shouldn't drink? What should parents tell their children about drinking and drugs?

6) What is the difference between water and wine?

7) What enabled Jesus to be able to change the material substance of water?

8) Below are five arguments from people who deny the miracle ever happened. Answer them to the best of your ability. Check out the message for help.

#1 Jesus mixed some wine with the water in the pots to make it seem like he turned water into wine.

#2 Jesus' disciples snuck wine in with the water.

#3 The wine wasn't real.

#4 Jesus slipped a glass of wine to the banquet organizer to be tasted.

#5 John just made the story up.

9) Memorize John 20:30-31 and reflect on John's purpose for writing the Gospel of John.

10) With John's purpose of the book in mind, what do you think is John's purpose of relating this miracle to us? Application: Do you find a greater appreciation of Jesus from this sign?

11) Application: If you have a friend who likes to party, what could you tell him or her about how much more special Jesus Christ is in your life than the momentary highs they might get from partying?