

This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory.

The first disciples do not have to wait long before they begin to see greater things, and Jesus' glory manifested. At Cana Jesus performs what John labels "the first of his signs." John will record seven in total, noting that he could have recorded many others, "but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20.30f). It is important to remember this: the signs point to *who* Jesus is, and their purpose is to engender belief in him. Nevertheless, in spite of the signs, not all will receive him (1.11).



The main reason Jesus is rejected by his own people is that he is perceived as a threat to their own religious systems. This is apparent in the three major encounters Jesus has between this and the second sign (with the Jews in Jerusalem, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman). In each case, Jesus teaches that he will supersede what already exists.

In performing this first sign Jesus graphically illustrates how he will replace the old way of dealing with sin and being 'clean', i.e. ritual washing. As guests arrived at the wedding they would have dipped their hands and arms into the water-filled stone jars (see Mark 7.3f.). Jesus teaches that such ritual washing only cleans the outside of a person, it does not touch or change the heart. However when Jesus' lifeblood is poured out it will wash away the sin of the whole world, and his Spirit will be poured into the cleansed hearts of those who believe this. The days of ritual washing, like the host's wine, have run out. The new wine is about to be poured; it will not run out, but bring everlasting joy.

John notes that the wedding is “on the third day” (since Jesus arrived in Galilee). This too is significant. Well before John wrote his Gospel a summary of Christian belief was passed on which included the phrase “he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15.4). In the same way that the announcement of the Lamb of God (1.29) pointed to the crucifixion, so the first sign points to the seventh (the resurrection). The one whose glory is first glimpsed at a wedding in Galilee will finally be glorified by the Father when raised from the dead in Jerusalem.

Jesus speaks elsewhere of God’s kingdom being like a marriage feast, abounding with joy. Not only does Jesus provide wine at Cana when the host’s inadequate supply runs out (causing great embarrassment and shame), but he does so in superabundant quantity and superlative quality: by John’s reckoning, between 540 and 810 litres in total! The joy and goodness, the fullness of God’s kingdom, will - like the refilled water jars - be “up to the brim” (cf. 15.11).

To ponder

In what ways is God’s kingdom a place of fullness? (What is it full of?)

To pray

Loving and generous Father, open my eyes to all the signs of your kingdom and your Spirit at work, that I may rejoice in them and use them to point others to your Son Jesus Christ, in whose name I pray.
Amen

Reflection