

# OpenTheo

## Water to Wine and 1st Temple Cleansing (Part 1)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg delves into John chapter 2 and explores the events surrounding Jesus' attendance at a wedding and the subsequent turning of water into wine. Gregg discusses the significance of Jesus referring to his mother as "woman" and clarifies that this was not a rude or dismissive gesture but rather a declaration that his time had not yet come. He also examines the symbolic significance of Jesus turning the water used for Jewish purification rituals into wine and how it represents a transformation of the heart.

### **Transcript**

Today we are going to be looking at John chapter 2. This portion of the life of Christ that we are in is going to keep us in the gospel of John for several sessions. The Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, cover a lot of the same time period and emphasize a lot of the same time period of Jesus' life. But John fills in gaps that are left open in the other Gospels.

Notably, the first approximately one year of Jesus' ministry after he was baptized by John until he began his great Galilean ministry which occupies the most attention in the Gospels is that year of popularity in Galilee. But from the time he was baptized until that ministry in Galilee began, there were several months, possibly close to a year, which we sometimes refer to as the year of obscurity. Now the year of obscurity wasn't that Jesus was hiding out or anything.

He just wasn't doing a lot of public things or speaking in public, at least as far as the record shows. See, we don't have very much information about that period of time and that's why we call it obscure. He may not have been all that obscure, we just don't know very much about what he was doing.

But among the things he did, as we saw at the end of chapter one of John, was the calling of some of his initial followers. Of course he met Andrew and Simon and probably James and John, though they are not mentioned by name in the account, and Philip and Nathaniel and maybe some others that have not been recorded. Actually, by the end of chapter one, we don't know that there are any disciples actually following him other than

Nathaniel and Philip.

That is John chapter one. He says in verse 43 of chapter one, he saw Philip and he said, follow me. And first Philip went and got Nathaniel and we are to, I think, assume that Nathaniel joined him at that time and Philip and Nathaniel followed him.

Now, having met earlier in that same chapter, Andrew and Simon, as well as another unnamed disciple who is probably John, we are not told that they followed him at this time. And we do read in the Synoptic Gospels of a later point in time when they were fishing by the Sea of Galilee, an entirely different location than we are now reading about, and Jesus called them and they left their nets and they decisively put their past behind them and followed Jesus. That would apparently be a sequel to their initial meeting of him, which John tells about in chapter one, which means we don't know that they ever followed him immediately after they met him on this occasion.

In John chapter one, they met him, but there is no record of them following him nor of his asking them to or inviting them to. Remember that a couple of them were just standing with John the Baptist and they heard John speak and they followed on their own initiative. They followed Jesus and he said, who do you, what do you want? And they said, where do you lodge? And he said, I'll show you.

They went and spent the day with him. And that's all. We don't read that he gave them a call to follow him permanently at that time.

The first and only person that he ever called to follow him at this point is Philip in chapter one, verse forty three. And as I said, the fact that we later read of a call of the four fishermen by the Sea of Galilee at a time which is considerably later than this suggests that they did not follow him when they first met him, perhaps because he didn't ask them to or they weren't ready to or something else. Later, of course, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew and then the two brothers James and John also followed Jesus.

We do not know how many disciples Jesus had with him at the beginning of John chapter two, because again, it may be that he had only Philip and Nathaniel, but it's also possible that some other people had followed Jesus that whose call or maybe they weren't called. They just followed him on their own initiative has not been mentioned. But in chapter two of John, we have two events to read about.

One is the first miracle Jesus performed and the other is the first time he drove money changers out of the temple. Both of these are found in John chapter two. They're not found in any of the other gospels.

The driving of the money changers out of the temple, which story is given in John two verses 13 through 22, is like an event that is found in the synoptic gospels. All three of the synoptic gospels are at least two of them. I think all three also mentioned Jesus

driving money changers out of the temple, but not on this occasion.

All the synoptic gospels place the cleansing of the temple, as we call it, at the end of Jesus ministry, not the beginning. Some have been confused about this because John doesn't mention a cleansing at the end of the ministry, but only one at the beginning. The synoptics do not mention one at the beginning, but only one at the end.

And since all the gospels, therefore, record only one time of Jesus cleansing the temple, it has been thought by some that Jesus did it only one time and that John has, for reasons of his own, placed it in the wrong place chronologically. Whereas the synoptics place it at the end of his ministry, John has, for some reason, put it at the beginning. My approach is somewhat different.

I believe that John was deliberately writing to supplement the other gospels. When John wrote his gospel, the others were already available. It was not his purpose to duplicate what they said, and he very rarely overlapped their material in his writing.

And that being so, I think it likely that Jesus cleansed the temple twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of his ministry, the synoptics already having mentioned the second, but not the first. John tells us about the first and does not bother to talk about the second. It's not necessary to repeat what the others had already said.

Anyway, I am of the opinion that Jesus cleansed the temple twice and that John alone tells us of the first instance. But first we read of the first miracle of Jesus in the first twelve verses of John chapter two. On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

Now, both Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding, and when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to him, they have no wine. Jesus said to her, Woman, what does your concern have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Whatever he says to you, do it.

Now there were set there six water pots of stone, according to the manner of the purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, Fill the water pots with water, and they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, Draw some out now and take it to the master of the feast, and they took it.

When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from, but the servants who had drawn the water knew, the master of the feast called the bridegroom, and he said to him, Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then that which is inferior. But you have kept the good wine until now. This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

After this he went down to the Capernaum, he and his mother and brothers and his

disciples, and they did not stay there many days. The third day from their departure toward Galilee. Because in chapter one there were four successive days that we read of.

The next day John saw, the next day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and so forth. There were four successive days that specifically refer to the next day this happened, the next day this happened, the next day this happened. John up to this point has been very careful about designating the successive days of the chronology of events he is describing.

In verse 43 of chapter one he says, The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and that's when he called Philip and also Nathaniel apparently joined him. Now the third day probably was, how long it took them from that day that was last mentioned when he called Philip and Nathaniel, is now three days later, they arrived in Galilee. That is a possible understanding.

It's also possible of course that the third day is simply a way of referring to Tuesday. Because in the Bible they don't have names for days, they just have, except for the Sabbath, they have first day of the week, second day of the week, third day of the week, and so forth, as the way that they speak of individual days. Sunday for example, frequently spoken of in the Bible, but always referred to as the first day of the week.

And the third day would be a way of designating Tuesday. This could mean that it was not three days after the previous story in chapter one, because we don't know what day of the week the previous story occurred, but this just happened to be on a Tuesday, there was a wedding. That's another possibility.

I've heard some people give a very mystical interpretation of this, I just might as well bring it up, because you may hear it someday, I think it's silly to tell you the truth. And that is that the third day takes into account that in 2 Peter 3 it says a day to the Lord is a thousand years, and a thousand years is a day. And it says on the third day there was a wedding.

And when Jesus comes back, it's the wedding feast, and this is a coded message for us to know that Jesus is going to come back on the third day. Now if a day is a thousand years, then we've had two thousand years since he went away, that means around the year 2000 we begin the third day, and that means that that's when Jesus is going to come back. I actually heard this back in the 70s, and I've heard it since then mentioned by people, it seems to me rather a silly approach.

I don't think John is trying to write hidden secret coded messages here, he's just telling us the story. Whether it was on a Tuesday or whether it was three days after the events of the previous chapter, not too important for us to decide. There was a wedding in Canaan, one of the things that strikes us immediately is that we don't know anything about who was getting married.

The Mormons actually believe that Jesus was getting married, it was his wedding. The Mormons believe that Jesus actually in his lifetime married three women, that he was a polygamist, that he married Mary Magdalene and the two sisters from Bethany, Mary and Martha. This is obviously fairly absurd, it seems to me, but just recently, where was I? Oh, in Canada, when I was up there about a week ago, somebody handed me a book to read that was written by some unbelievers about the life of Jesus.

And they made a case, I was reading from it because this student wanted me to respond to it, they made a case that Jesus was married. They didn't believe he was married to three women, they believed he married only one woman, but they had all this elaborate argument to try to show that the woman he was married to was Mary Magdalene, who was also Mary of Bethany, and that that was his wife, and they believed that this wedding was his wedding. Now to me, it's fairly absurd, but let me tell you why they think this is so.

They point out that Jesus and his whole family, apparently, were there, his mother was there. Furthermore, his mother acts like she's in charge. When they're out of wine, she takes it as if it's her personal concern.

She gives orders to the servants as if they were her servants, and they obey her. And the suggestion is that this wedding was at her home. This was her son's wedding, Jesus' wedding.

And that Mary was the mother of the groom. Further, they point out that when the wine had been tasted, the new wine had been tasted, it says in verse 9 at the end that the master of the feast called the bridegroom, and he said to him, every man at the beginning puts out the good wine, but he goes down a little further and says, but you have kept the good wine until now. And these people argue that the bridegroom was clearly Jesus, because he's the one who brought out this wine at the end, and he's speaking to the bridegroom as if he has brought out this best wine.

Now, these arguments seem to me very, very difficult ways of trying to prove a point. Frankly, the Bible nowhere specifically says that Jesus never married. Traditionally, we believe he remained unmarried all his life, and I personally believe that is the case.

The Bible does not ever say that he didn't marry, but it also doesn't ever say that he did marry, and I think it would be a significant enough thing that it would be mentioned if he did. Certainly, this story is not told as if to tell us that Jesus was married. It would have been the easiest thing in the world for John to let us know that if that's what he was trying to say.

He could have said Jesus was getting married. Instead, he says there was a wedding and Jesus and his disciples were invited. It specifically says that in verse 2, both Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding.

It seems to me magnanimous for them to invite the groom to his own wedding. It would be a shame if his invitation didn't arrive on time or something. But it seems clearly told as if Jesus is not the groom.

However, the fact does remain that Mary does seem to have a role of prominence in the wedding. That might be because it was a Roman Catholic wedding, but in all likelihood, it was a relative's wedding. It might have even been one of Jesus' brothers.

We have no information as to the marital status of Jesus' brothers. We know he had at least four brothers. It could well have been that one of his own brothers was getting married and that Mary was the hostess there.

But I think that's not likely because the wedding was not in Nazareth, which was their hometown. It was in Cana, which was not all that far away, but we have not read anywhere that the family moved from Nazareth to Cana. My feeling is the wedding was probably of some friend of the family or possibly a relative, a cousin or something of Jesus, so that Mary was recognized in the home there.

Not as the mistress of the home, but she was someone the servants knew. Probably a familiar face around there. Jesus was invited to the wedding.

His mother and his brothers apparently were there. Probably just a friend of the family or a relative, but certainly nothing about it would strongly argue for it being Jesus' wedding. That's just, to me, an absurdity.

It does say that the mother of Jesus was there, and as I said a moment ago, that would seem to be unnecessary to state if John was implying that it was Jesus' own wedding. Of course his mother would be there, and that Jesus would be invited obviously wouldn't make any sense at all if it was referring to his own wedding. Now Jesus, of course, apparently did live a celibate life.

He apparently did not ever marry. While the Bible doesn't state it outright, the description of Jesus' life is certainly that of not a family man. He had disciples who traveled with him, but there's no reference to any wife traveling with him, no reference to him having any children, and therefore I think the implication is strong that he was not married.

However, he was not an ascetic who thought marriage to be a bad thing. There have always been some holy men in many religions, including Christianity and Judaism too, who felt that marriage was simply a carnal thing, that marriage wasn't an honorable thing. The Bible teaches otherwise, and it's often been stated at Christian weddings that Jesus dignified marriage even though he did not marry himself, he didn't marry, but he did his first miracle at a wedding, and obviously he was in attendance and favorable toward this wedding.

We don't know who the groom was or anything, but Jesus must have been, he attended the wedding, he seemed to approve of it, and obviously he was not against getting married. Now, they ran out of wine, and this came to the attention of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This in no way forces us to the conclusion that she was the owner of the house, or even that she was the caterer, but that she was probably maybe the sister of the owner of the house, or a friend, and they confided in her, and she came to Jesus and said they have no wine.

Now, her reason for coming to Jesus is not entirely clear. We know, because we've read the whole story, that Jesus ended up making some more wine for them. We also know because we've read all the Gospels that Jesus was a miracle worker, but according to the record, Jesus had never worked any miracles prior to this.

Mary had known Jesus for some 30 years and had never seen him do a miracle, therefore there's not much reason to think that she was approaching him about this, anticipating that he would in fact do a miracle. She wouldn't have any frame of reference for this expectation. He had been a dutiful son.

Probably Joseph was now dead. This can be assumed from a number of things. One is that he wasn't there at the wedding.

Another, by the fact that in verse 12, the mother and brothers and Jesus and the disciples traveled together and stayed a while in Capernaum. Joseph is not there. Mary is now traveling around like she's a widow, rather than a married woman.

And the fact that three years later when Jesus was crucified, he committed the keeping of his mother to John, suggests that she didn't any longer have a living husband to take care of her. So somewhere since Jesus' 12th birthday until this time, probably in those 18 years somewhere, Joseph must have died. And that being so, Mary had probably come to look to Jesus, her oldest son, to kind of take care of important things that a husband ordinarily would take care of.

Probably paying the bills, running the family business, and so forth. And she probably just came to Jesus out of habit. And she had some concern.

She just came to him and figured, well, he's smart, he's competent, maybe he can do something here. Jesus had disciples for all she knew. Maybe he had some clout.

Someone could lend them some money to buy some wine to help out their host. Who knows what she expected. But to suggest that she planned on him doing a miracle would be an unlikely suggestion, I think.

Because, as I said, she was not acquainted with him as a miracle worker. Only as somebody who is no doubt very responsible and businesslike and concerned about things like this. So this would be a tremendous embarrassment to a host to run out of

wine.

A wedding feast in biblical times wasn't just like our few hours long reception after a wedding. It was more like a two week affair. It's like a party that went on for a week or two.

Sometimes as much as two weeks. And with guests coming and going, of course, depending on their availability, one would have a hard time anticipating how much food to have on hand. Now to run out of wine would be very embarrassing.

Wine was used largely to decontaminate the water. They mixed wine, usually one part wine with about four or five parts water. The water in Israel and probably most parts of the world was not very safe to drink otherwise.

And so they would put wine in there and it would help to make it drinkable. If they ran out of wine, they'd be in big trouble. People couldn't drink anything else.

It's not as if it was a beverage that was optional. They needed it to drink and the festivities were over when there was no more wine. And apparently it ran out prematurely.

They ran out for reasons we do not know. Now we might say, well, why did this host have the poor foresight? It's not buying up wine. Why did they invite so many guests and so forth? Some might suggest that Jesus had a lot of disciples by this point, though we haven't got the names of most of them, and that the arrival of Jesus with a bunch of disciples put a strain upon the catering that was not anticipated.

And that would be why Mary came to Jesus about it. Like, hey, you know, you and your friends, you know, they caused him to run out of wine. This is a conjecture that can't be established.

It's one of many things that have been suggested, why they ran out of wine. I mean, anything could happen. Mice could have eaten through the wineskins and they could have lost a few bottles that way or whatever.

In any case, Mary realized that the host and hostess were in a very embarrassing situation. And no doubt she had no clue how Jesus would remedy it, but probably being accustomed to bringing problems like this to Jesus, she just didn't know what to do. She just did.

She informed him. They have no wine. But he indicated that he was not going to act on her suggestion.

So he said, woman, what is that or what does your concern have to do with me? Now, in referring to her as woman, it sounds a little bit gruff, a little bit disrespectful for a man to



speak to his mother, woman, you know. But actually it's not to be, it wouldn't have the same sense. It would not necessarily be as crude or rude as it would be in our society.

Jesus spoke to people and called them man and called them woman when he was not in any sense being rough with them. It's just a cultural thing. If you called your mother woman right now, just to address a woman by that way just seems a little bit sort of confrontational or something.

But Jesus was just responding to her. He could have said mother. Some translations would translate it my lady or madam or whatever.

But the point is, he's not being rude to her, but he does say, what does your concern have to do with me? He's indicating that, what I understand him to be saying is that he is now no longer, since he's left home, going to be about his mother's business. He's going to be about his father's business. The earliest chronological recorded statement of Jesus in the Bible is that statement he made at age 12 in Luke chapter 2 when his parents finally found him in the temple after looking for him for days.

And they said, where have you been? We've been worried about you. He said, well, why did you have to seek for me? Didn't you know I must be about my father's business? But they didn't understand him at that point. And he went home and was subject to them for that 18 years longer.

But now he had left home and he was really about his father's business. And he could no longer be about his mother's business. When he lived at home, he was no doubt doing all the mundane things, paying the bills, running the business, disciplining the younger siblings or whatever, like a father would since his stepdad was probably dead at this point.

And he had always been there for Mary to go to, like a woman would ordinarily go to her husband for things that were necessary. And I think what he's trying to get across to her at this point is he can no longer be about her business. He's left home and he's now on another schedule.

He says, my hour has not yet come. And I personally understand that to mean it's not yet the time for me to do anything about this. Just because you see a need, mom, doesn't mean that this puts some kind of imperative on me to do something because I'm now answerable to someone else, namely God, for my doings.

I'm going to do everything my father shows me to do and not necessarily the things you think I need to do. Now, this is not, in my opinion, an attempt to be rude to her, but just to clarify to her that whereas she's always been able to come to him before about such matters, he's not going to be in that kind of relationship with her anymore. She's going to be just like anyone else.

He's got to follow his father. And you know, later on in the story, not this story, but later in the Gospels, Mary and others came to see Jesus when he was teaching in a crowded room and they couldn't get near. And they sent a message up to Jesus, your mother and your brothers are here to see you.

And he said, who are my mother and my brothers? Those who do the will of my father and my mother and my brothers. And he didn't treat her as anything special at all. Which is interesting in view of the fact that one of the reasons that the Roman Catholics believe in praying to Mary is that they say Jesus would never deny any request his mother would make.

And it makes it sound as if Jesus is not disposed toward doing any good toward us and so we have to get his mother on our side. But the fact of the matter is, if the Bible gives us any guidance on this matter, Jesus did deny his mother's request from time to time. At least he clarified to her that she's not going to be calling the play.

She's not going to be setting the agenda for him. Having left home, he's now doing his father's business, not his mother's. And so he corrects his mother about this.

His mother nonetheless still felt sure that if Jesus had any ideas, they'd be good ones. So there were servants standing around and she said, listen, if he tells you to do anything, be sure you do it. Essentially saying, Jesus, whatever you need to do, these servants will be available to you.

Now by the way, she didn't say to the servants, if you need to talk to him, talk to me first and I'll talk to him for you. She was not a mediator for them. She just said, whatever Jesus tells you to do, you do that.

Now there were set there six water pots of stone according to the manner of purification of the Jews containing 20 or 30 gallons apiece. Since there were six of them and they each held 20 or 30 gallons, this is 120 to 180 gallons total. That's a lot of water, especially when it all turned into wine.

And when you mix the water, five parts water with one part wine, you could figure 180 gallons of wine could serve a lot of guests. So it must have been a very large wedding feast to require so much. And Jesus at some point, we don't know whether much time had elapsed, he told them to fill the water pots with water, which they did, right up to the brim.

I think it mentions in verse 7 that they filled them to the brim in order to point out that there wasn't room in the pots for Jesus to add something, to do something tricky and add something in there to make it wine-like. For instance, if it had not been filled to the brim, he might have added some portion of wine, actual wine to it, and then it would color the whole pot and make it look like wine. But they filled it to the brim with water, so there

wasn't room for Jesus to add anything and make it seem as if he turned water into wine.

And he said to them, draw some out now and take it to the Master of the Feast, which commentators say the Master of the Feast would be like the head waiter of the whole affair. And they took it, and the Master of the Feast, when he had tasted the water that was now made wine, now this is the first time we realize that the water has become wine. Up to this point, it's just been water.

But when it's brought to the Master of the Feast, we are now told the water was now made wine. He did not know where it came from, but the servants who had drawn the water knew. The Master of the Feast called the bridegroom and said to him, every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then that which is inferior, but you have kept the good wine till now.

Now some people, those especially who try to say that the Bible doesn't really teach that Jesus did miracles. He just did kind and remarkable things, but he didn't do real miracles. These are the people that say that Jesus didn't really walk in the water, there were really stepping stones just below the surface of the water, and so forth.

They suggest that Jesus didn't really turn water into wine, but the Master of the Feast just kind of joined in good-naturedly into the spirit of the whole joke, like Jesus was doing, sort of a joke. Jesus didn't think they really needed any more wine, they had already used up all the wine, let's just give them some water now. And he told the servants to bring some of that water to the feast as if it were wine, and the guy tasted it, and either sarcastically or good-naturedly, he just jokingly said, oh wow, this is better wine than we had earlier, and kind of going along with the gag.

That's actually what some commentators have suggested was going on here. However, the Bible specifically says in verse 9, the water that was now made wine. So when the man tasted it and said, hey, this is good wine, he wasn't joking, it was good wine, it was better than the wine they'd brought out before.

Now, this is said in verse 11 to be the beginning of signs for Jesus. It was apparently the first miracle he performed. Now, when John talks about the miracles of Jesus, he uses the word signs.

The Greek word is semion, s-e-m-i-o-n. It's s-e-i-m-i-o-n, I think it is. But the word actually means sign, just like we have it here in English.

But there are other words for miracles in the Greek that are used in the Bible. But John always uses this word semion, or sign. And that suggests that he's referring to miracles particularly that are a sign of something.

Some miracles just did good. Healing a person who was sick, raising a dead person could easily just be seen as a kind act, a use of supernatural power to do some act of kindness.

But in referring to them as signs, John is insinuating that these miraculous acts had a symbolic message, like a sign.

They confirmed something. There was a spiritual meaning behind these particular miracles. Most of Jesus' miracles, virtually all of them, were acts of compassion and benevolence to people who had a need.

Sick people being healed, demon-possessed people being delivered, widows having their sons restored to them from the dead, feeding multitudes who were hungry, and so forth. Most of the time, Jesus didn't just do carnival trick kind of miracles. In fact, he never did.

However, of all the miracles of Jesus, this one perhaps seems to be the most like a carnival trick in the sense that it's just a demonstration of power that does not seem to meet a real important need. I mean, if not for the embarrassment of the host, they could just close the wedding feast. They could just say, well, wedding feast is over, we've run out of food, run out of wine.

It'd be an embarrassment, but it's not like there was someone really going to be permanently hurt by the situation. Jesus could have just said, well, you know, that's their poor planning. A lot of people run out of stuff, and I guess they just have to pay some music.

But instead, Jesus bailed them out. Now, personally, I believe that John only recorded miracles of Jesus which had a symbolic value to them. In other words, like I said, some of Jesus' miracles were just acts of kindness.

Others had a symbolic message behind them. In John's gospel, I believe there are seven or eight, I think including the resurrection of Jesus, eight miracles recorded. And they are this one, and then the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, or the nobleman's son before that at a distance.

We have like the feeding of the multitude in chapter six. We have the raising of Lazarus in chapter 11. I can't list all of them for you right now because my mind just doesn't recall all of them in order.

But the particular miracles that John records, seemingly he records for the purpose of making a spiritual point about it. For example, when Jesus fed the multitude, which is the only miracle in John that's recorded in all the other gospels as well. The feeding of the 5,000 is recorded in John chapter six.

It's also in all three of the synodic gospels. Apart from the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, there are no other miracles of Jesus that are recorded in all four gospels. But the other gospels don't mention this, which John does.

That after Jesus fed the 5,000, he went on to give a speech about himself being the

bread of life. His body being bread and his blood being drink, and that people should eat and drink of him and so forth. In other words, the feeding of the multitude in John is immediately followed by Jesus' declaration that he is the real food for the multitudes.

He is the real bread that comes down from heaven. He is the bread of life. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, it was immediately after he made this announcement.

I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

Then he raised Lazarus to prove that he was the resurrection and the life. Jesus opened the eyes of a man born blind in chapter 9. Shortly after that, he says, I am the light of the world. The opening of a blind man's eyes give occasion for Jesus to point out that he is the light of the world.

The people who are blind can be made to have sight, spiritually speaking. And so the miracles of Jesus that John records seem to correspond to things that Jesus tried to get across about himself. Now, not every one of the miracles is accompanied by Jesus saying, I am this or I am that.

Though there are some additional I am sayings of Jesus in John that are not immediately connected with any other miracles, I believe that one of the statements of Jesus later in the Gospel of John is connected with this miracle. And is the message behind this miracle. This miracle actually I think has tremendous spiritual meaning.

I would like to explore it just a little bit here. Jesus said in John 15.1, I am the true vine. John 15.1, I am the true vine, he said.

And he said again in John 15.5, I am the vine and you are the branches. Now, what does a vine do, essentially? What is the purpose of a vine? It turns water into wine, does it not? Doesn't a vine, isn't its whole function? Of course we could say, well, not all grapes are made into wine. We have raisins and grapes that we eat also.

But biblically, a vineyard was usually used, most of its produce was wine. They did have raisins and grapes that they ate, but most of the produce of a vineyard was made into wine. Because it was an important staple at mealtime to be able to dilute your water with wine.

To purify it. A vine was principally there for making wine. Vineyards are for that purpose, largely.

But what a vine does, therefore, is take moisture out of the environment, turn it into grapes, which are then, and juice in the grapes are later made into wine. So, in Jesus saying, I am the true vine, just as when he said, I am the resurrection of the life, he illustrated it by raising Lazarus from the dead. I am the light of the world, and he gave a

man sight who had been blind.

In saying, I am the true vine, I believe he demonstrated it by turning water into wine. That's what vines do. However, of course, Jesus is not a literal vine.

And what he was saying when he talked about being the vine, he didn't mean to say that he's literally here to turn water into wine. Not literal water into literal wine. However, there is a spiritual meaning to this miracle that does have something to do with Jesus.

The meaning of Jesus' statement here, I believe. I would point out to you that in verse 6 of John 2, we are not only informed of the number and size of the pots, there were six, and they held about 20 to 30 gallons each, but we're told of what they were there for, initially. They were pots, we're told, and this could have been left out without leaving anything important out of the story, seemingly.

It says that these water pots of stone were according to the manner of the purification of the Jews. What this means is these were the kinds of pots, these pots were there in the household for this purpose, to follow the Jewish purification laws. And by purification, we mean the hand washing and the bowl washing and all the washing stuff that the traditions of the rabbis had introduced as part of being Jewish.

Part of being ceremonially clean. Every time you came in from the marketplace, you'd wash yourself and you'd wash your tables and your couches and things like that. We're told that in Mark chapter 7, which I guess it wouldn't hurt us to take a look at real quickly.

In Mark chapter 7, it tells us of this custom of the Jews to wash all this stuff. It's a custom that Jesus did not have a lot of respect for. But it says in Mark 7 in verses 3 and 4, For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.

When they come in from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash, and there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Now, this was all part of the way that the Jews purified themselves, and it had nothing to do with hygiene. It had to do with ceremonial cleanness.

And it was a tremendous number of additions to what the law actually said. You know, the law did have washings as part of it. Ritual purification by washing was not entirely absent from the law of Moses.

When a person was unclean because of a seminal discharge or because of having touched a dead body or whatever, they'd be unclean for a period of time, after which, you remember what they did? They'd bathe and wash their clothes, and then they could reenter normal society. That was part of the ritual of becoming purified again from a

period of uncleanness, that they'd wash themselves and their clothes. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest washed himself several times during the day.

But apart from these facts, there were no other requirements to wash cups, bowls, and all this other stuff, such as the Jews added to it. They amplified greatly upon what the law actually required in this respect. Now, John takes pains to point out to us that the pots used here to turn water into wine were ceremonial purification Jewish water pots.

They represent, in my opinion, the cleansing available through the law and the traditions of the elders. That is, the cleansing that the Jews sought and practiced through the law and through their traditions. Now, one thing Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees when they criticized his disciples for not washing their hands properly, he said, you know, you Pharisees, you wash the outside of the cup.

Inside, though, you're not clean at all. Your heart is full of wickedness. He said this also over in Matthew 23.

When he was railing on the scribes and Pharisees, he points out how their cleansing customs were a good illustration of their own lives because they'd clean up the outside, but they weren't clean inside. He says that in Matthew 23, 25. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish that the outside of them may be clean. And he goes on in the next verse to talk about them being like whitewashed tombs. Again, white and clean on the outside, but full of uncleanness inside.

He's using that as an analogy of their own spiritual lives. Outwardly, they'd cleaned up their act. Outwardly, they were washed, and they washed all the time to make sure they stayed that way.

But inside, they were unchanged. They had no changed heart. Now, the difference between water and wine in this sense... Now, of course, this water was used to drink because it turned into wine, and they drank wine.

But the pots in which the water was, was washing pots. The pots the wine was made in were pots that had been used for washing the outside of the skin in the ceremonial manner. Cleaning the outside of the cup and so forth.

But Jesus changed it to wine. And one thing the Bible makes note of about wine is wine affects the heart. Wine actually, according to Scripture, cheers the heart.

It changes your consciousness. It changes your frame of mind. Over in Psalm 104, we have this comment about wine.

I realize some Christians are pretty strong against wine, but the Bible nowhere takes a strong stand against wine in general, just against drunkenness. And in this case, one might even think it's bordering on talking about drunkenness, too. But in Psalm 104, in verse 15, it says, And wine that makes glad the heart of man.

Wine makes glad the heart of man. You know what? Over in Judges 9.13, it says that wine does the same thing to God. Judges 9.13, if you want to have a look, kind of surprising, really, indicates that God made wine to make people happy, apparently.

So it seems. In Judges 9, in a little parable that's being told here, where the trees are looking for a king, they ask the vine if it'll be the king over the trees. And in verse 13, the vine said to them, Should I cease my new wine, which cheers both God and men, and go to sway over the trees? Wine cheers the heart of man.

It even cheers God and men. The point to make, however, is that everybody knows that wine affects the thinking. Wine affects men internally.

You know, when Jesus said, And it's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him. We would have to make an exception in the case of things like alcohol and drugs that do alter the consciousness, because too much of that, too much alcohol and any amount of consciousness altering drugs, it can defile you, because it affects your heart. When Jesus said, Nothing that goes into the mouth defiles him, he means food.

Food that nourishes you. It doesn't, I mean, food goes into your belly and goes out again, he says, and doesn't have any effect on your spiritual man. But some things you take in do have effect on your heart.

Now Jesus turned water in washing pots, which I think symbolized the ritual cleansing of the outside, which Judaism and its traditional development had represented, and replaced it with something Jesus was bringing, which changed the heart. He had come to do something internal in man. You know, the difference between water and wine is significant in many ways.

The principal way is in this, that the water could wash the outside, but wine changes the heart and cures the heart. But it's also the case that water, left to itself, gets stagnant and polluted and so forth. Wine doesn't, because of its alcohol content, it remains pure.

In fact, it can be used to purify water that has become infested or whatever, has been contaminated. Wine is pure and it's purifying. Whereas water, after it's been sitting too long with the top off, is going to have stuff in it that you wouldn't want to drink because of the microorganisms and so forth.

But what Jesus brought was something superior to what Moses brought and what the rabbis had elaborated on. A cleansing that had to do with a changed heart, not that had to do with washing simply outward bodies or, by way of symbolism, outward behavior



only. It's not just outward behavior.

It's a changed heart that matters to God. If you look over at Ephesians...