

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

John 2:1-11

Year C - Epiphany 2, Text: John 2:1-11
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While we often refer to the works of wonder that Jesus performed as “miracles” — John refers to Jesus’ miraculous deeds as “signs.” They are signs that point to Jesus by making a theological statement in relation to his ministry. The first of these signs took place at Cana in Galilee.

Verses 2:1-5: Jesus attends a wedding celebration at Cana in Galilee where, in the course events, the hosts run out of wine. To run out of wine at a wedding is a social disaster, and brings disgrace on the family. The couple celebrating their marriage might read the situation as one that will bring bad luck on their future life together.

Verses 2:6-7: Jesus goes to their rescue. He tells servants at the celebration to fill six stone jars with water — up to the brim.

As is mentioned in v.6, the water in these jars would have been used for purification rites. Jews were in the minority in Galilee and came into repeated contact with Gentiles — who were regarded as being ritually unclean and a source of defilement. After each encounter with Gentiles, Jews had to make themselves ritually clean once again by means of a ceremonial washing (see Mark 7:3–4).

Water used for this purpose had to be in *stone* jars. After all, if jars are made out of clay, water poured into them can infiltrate the clay and be rendered ceremonially unclean — making it unfit for use in purification rites.

Verses 2:8-9: When the servants draw out the contents of the jars, they find that it has been changed. The hosts now have access to an estimated 150 to 225 gallons of very good wine! A number of Old Testament passages suggested that, when the Messiah finally came, there would be an abundance of wine (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18). The non-canonical 2 Baruch 29:5 says something similar:

The earth will also yield fruits ten thousandfold. And

*on one vine will be a thousand branches, and one branch will produce a thousand clusters, and one cluster will produce a thousand grapes, and one grape will produce a cor of wine. (*The measure referred to as “cor” is uncertain; estimates vary from 35 to 60 gallons.)*

When Jesus creates an abundance of wine at Cana, He declares that the Messianic Age has come. Furthermore, water intended for use in ritual washings is transformed into wine that makes the heart glad.

The Number Seven

It seems that John presents Jesus as turning water into wine on a “seventh day.” Some scholars suggest that these early chapters of John correspond to the Seven days of Creation: John 1:1, day one; 1:29, day two; 1:35, day three; 1:43, day four; 2:1, three days later. Total: seven.

As God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:1-3), so Jesus brings His people rest from rituals such as purification rites on a seventh day. Indeed, He brings us eternal Sabbath Rest! Where Jesus is present, all previous purification rituals and practices are superseded. To be in Jesus’ presence is to experience unending joy. Jesus alone establishes and sustains humanity’s relationship with the Father.

This reappearance of the “perfect” number seven is something seen throughout John’s Gospel:

- John makes reference to seven signs that Jesus performed during His earthly ministry: 2:1–12; 4:43–54; 5:1–16; 6:1–15; 6:16–24; 9:1–41; 11:1–44.
- There are seven scenes embedded in the narrative describing Jesus’ healing of a blind man (each beginning with the following verses: 9:1, 7b, 13, 18, 24, 35, 40),
- There are seven scenes in His trial by Pilate (each beginning with the following verses: 18:28; 18:33; 18:38b; 19:4; 19:8; 19:13).

