

The Wedding at Cana

JCV Integrated Text: **John 2:1-12**

The third day, a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee and Jesus' mother was there. So both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.

Now having run out of wine, Jesus' mother laid it out to Him, "They have no wine!" Jesus responded to her, "Woman, what has that *got to do* with you and me? My hour has not yet come." His mother explained to the servants, "Whatever He might say to you, do it."

Now there were six stone water jars standing there as required by the Jewish way of purification, each with space for two or three metretes [75 to 113 litres]. Jesus told them, "Fill the water jars with water." They filled them up to the brim. Next He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies." So they took it. So when the master of ceremonies tasted the water (now become wine), not knowing where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of ceremonies called the bridegroom, and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when *the guests* have drunk freely, *they serve* the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!"

Jesus performed this first of His signs in Cana of Galilee, and so revealed His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

After this, He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; they stayed there for not too long a period.

Introduction

It is winter AD29 and Jesus travels up to Cana in Galilee with His disciples and His family. He performs His first public 'Sign' turning water into wine at a wedding. Eastern weddings would last several days. When it was finished they all went to Capernaum where they stayed for some time.

Going to Cana

John begins with '**The third day**'. There are various theories on what this meant – I take the simple view by looking back at what **John** has related up to this point and counting the days in accordance with how he has described the passage of time....

Time quote	Day	Reference	Event
	0	John 1:19-28	Who is John the Baptist?
“The next day”	1	John 1:29-34	John declares Jesus, The Lamb of God
“Again the next day”	2	John 1:35-42	Andrew & John meet Jesus (possibly Simon) refer to Jesus as Rabbi
“On the next day...”	3	John 1:43+	Jesus is heading to Galilee... Because, “The third day there was a wedding...”

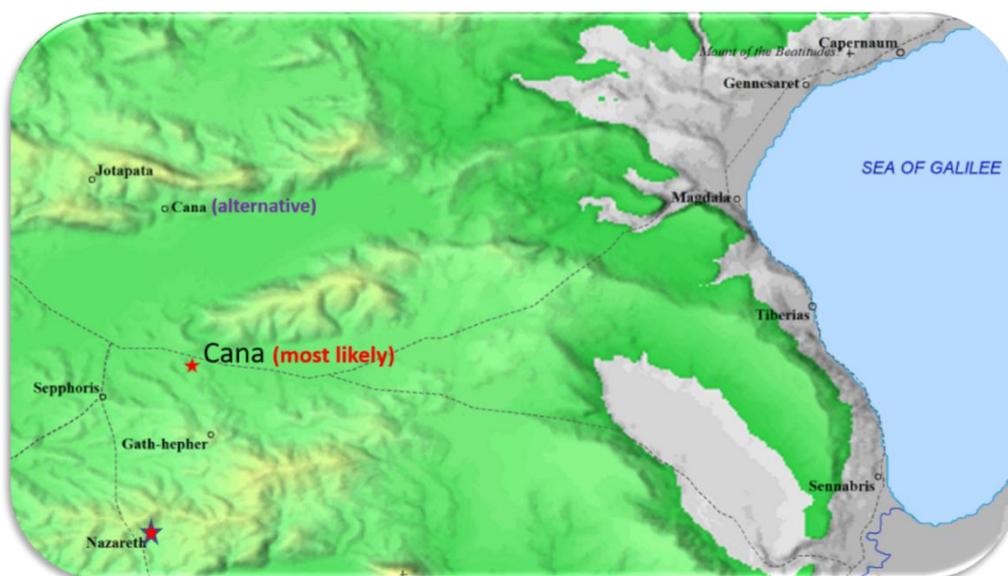
So, on the third of the ‘next days’ Jesus is going to Cana. He knows his mother will be there but notice that the disciples were also invited. This gives weight to the proposition which we have raised previously - that Jesus was already ministering as a teacher.

Rabbi was only formalised as a title with an official position after the destruction of the Temple but before then was used more informally for those who taught and had some disciples or followers.

It probably takes a few days or so for Jesus and His disciples to travel up to Cana.

Some background about Cana

There are two possibilities in Galilee for this Cana . ★ One is less than 5 miles from Nazareth but shows no signs of occupation in the first Century AD, the second is 8.3 miles from Nazareth and was far more significant. This is my preferred location. (It should be noted that there are two Syrian towns called Cana which Lebanese Christians tend to see as Biblical Cana). It would be a couple of hours or so walk from Nazareth so it would be feasible to go there and back in a day.



While Cana only appears in **John's** Gospel it seems to have some significance to Jesus and His family (see below). Later the Gospels record tensions between Jesus and His family at the beginning of his public ministry so it maybe that the Synoptic writers do not directly refer to this wedding because of these sensitivities. Jesus returns to Cana after the first ejection from the Temple and it is here that a Royal official comes to find Him (**John 4:46-54**).

At the Wedding

The wine runs out and Mary asks Jesus what they should do about it.

It has been frequently speculated that the wedding is a family wedding in the immediate sense – sister or brother - probably a brother as Mary is not the formal hostess (which would be more likely for a son leaving and cleaving to a new family). However I think it is more likely to be wider family given the way in which Jesus responds, 'What has that to do with us,' but nonetheless Mary is close enough to feel some emotional responsibility for the situation even if ultimately she isn't the one technically responsible the servants respond to her instruction implying that she has some standing in their eyes.

At this point Jesus is in His 30s, unmarried. There is no hint anywhere that He is widowed so it is most likely that earlier on in His life He made the choice to give Himself to learning and teaching a eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom, (**Matt 19:12**) . **Luke** tells us that, after being found in the Temple at the age of 12, Jesus lived in subjection to His parents (**Luke 2:51,52**). It seems that Joseph dies at some point and perhaps this was a transition point for Jesus as He chose to be discipled in the Qumran community and began His participation with John the Baptist as a roving teaching rabbi.

The Marriage Motif

This is Jesus' first public sign and it occurs at a wedding. **John** records it because it is significant.

Remember at Jesus' baptism His Father calls Him 'My Son, The Beloved'. The Beloved is the title for the Bridegroom in **Song of Solomon**. Many commentators comment that marriage is strong motif all the way through **John's** Gospel. In fact, it spans the whole of the New Testament - **Revelation** culminates in the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Early in the Synoptics Jesus also picks up the marriage motif saying that they will mourn when the Bridegroom is no longer with them (**Matt 9:15, Mark 2: 19-20, Luke 5:34-35**). This a direct reference to the prophetic image in **Jeremiah**:

Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem,
the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice
of the bride; for the land shall become a waste. **Jeremiah 7:32-34**

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The Bridegroom is present and there is celebration which is cut short and there is mourning. But the **bridegroom** returns in **Jeremiah 33:11** and there is celebration - pointing to the resurrection.

Back to the Wedding

When Jesus responds to Mary with 'My hour has not yet come', it seems to imply that Mary has some level of understanding that something about this family wedding is somehow relevant to Jesus' teaching. We know that Mary stored things up in her heart (eg. **Luke 2:19, 51**). She will have reflected on events which Jesus in the natural wouldn't remember (eg. Angels at birth, coming of the wise men) and observed Jesus as He was growing up. It seems likely that they would have had discussions over the years.

So there is the practical element of Mary's question – no wine – but also a deeper question which has something to do with what Jesus is coming to do. Jesus remains subject to His mother during the exchange and Mary then speaks to the servants to instruct them to do as Jesus says.

Turning the Water into Wine

There is a striking parallel between the flow of events of the plagues of **Exodus** and the public miracles of Jesus which follow the same chronology.

It begins in Exodus with Moses **pouring out water** which becomes **blood** and the **water becomes undrinkable (Exodus 4:9)** and here for Jesus' first public miracle He instructs the servants to **pour out water** which becomes **wine**. The **new wine is better than the old**. **Blood** is a symbol of death and **wine** a symbol of life. There is more detail on this in my book '[Jesus in the Great Escape](#)' and more on the plagues in my Youtube teaching series on **Exodus**. [This is a link to one video](#) but you can find other more detailed ones about the plagues elsewhere on the channel.

Here John is drawing attention to the fact that something is coming that is qualitatively better than what was before (even though that was good!)

To Capernaum

After wedding a significant part of Jesus' family seem to travel with Him and the disciples to Capernaum. It is possible there are family connections there via John. It also gives Jesus time to build His relationships with Peter, Andrew and Phillip before the start of His public ministry (about 9 months later).