



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 2:1-11

“The First Sign: Water into Wine”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The second chapter of the gospel of John contains in its opening verses the Johannine account of the first of the signs and we are going to read verses 1 through 11 which is the section in which the sign is described. So for the Scripture reading John chapter 2, verse 1 through verse 11.

“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they liked wine, the mother of Jesus said unto him, they have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six water pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw some out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bore it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: but the servants who drew the water knew; the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine

until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.”

May God bless this reading of his word. Our subject this morning in the exposition of the Gospel of John is “The First Sign: Water into Wine.” Webster’s Dictionary under “joy” has: the emotion excited by the acquisition of good. Probably most of us would like to know the experience of joy and would like to know that we do have a genuine experience of joy.

The apostles speak of it frequently. The Apostle Paul writing to the Philippians says, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” And then as if to emphasize it in the next chapter, the 4th chapter, repeats the exhortation twice, “Rejoice in the Lord, again I say, rejoice in the Lord.” This incident, in the second chapter of the Gospel of John, the first of the signs performed by the Lord Jesus according to John has been called Joy in Cana. And it reveals the way in which we may have joy. It is linked with an omnipotent Lord who is able to change water into wine and one who is worthy of trust. The disciples believed on him, John says.

I imagine that that statement is not simply the fact of their first belief in him for they evidently had believed in him up to this point too. But it represented something of a climax for them. Against the background of John chapter 2 one may put the futility of the world’s hopes and the world’s ideas, for the world often evangelizes us with the possibility with joy through the material goods of this life. It’s ideas of joy are contrary to the ideas of spiritual joy set forth in the word of God. The kind of wine that they offer is the kind of wine that disintegrates and gets worse as the years go by. But in the case of the spiritual wine that the Lord Jesus Christ provides, well as the governor of the feast said, it’s the kind of wine that gets better and better as time goes on.

There is a strange thing about this first of the signs set forth in the gospel of John that we ought to at least note. Many of the miracles of the Lord Jesus are healing miracles. Miracles in which he performed some particular good for individuals. And this miracle is one that seems to be something like -- well it has been called this -- a luxury miracle. Here is a marriage feast; the Lord

Jesus provides sixty to one hundred and fifty gallons of wine. Well it has been, therefore, unfavorably compared with some of the other miracles the Lord performed. Was it really necessary to provide a wedding feast with such an abundance of wine? It's almost as if he does more than is necessary in his miracles. But nevertheless, in spite of that fact, it is a magnificent testimony to the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, there is a - I'm very happy that we have this kind of miracle in Scripture because the tendency of modern scholarship is to say, “Well, the miracles of the Lord Jesus are the same kinds of miracles that we perform today. But we do it today through individuals who have medical training and through our medicines. He just antedated them by a thousand years or two.” In fact, it has been said that the miracles of the Lord Jesus are the things that are being accomplished today and that in his own practice he simply antedated by a couple of thousand years the discoveries of modern science.

There is a book written about fifty years ago on psychology and the church in which are these words, “There was a time when people said that miracles do not happen. The implication being that the narratives of miracles in the gospels are untrue. Now days practically all healing miracles in the New Testament have been reproduced and shell-shock hospitals over and over again.” Well of course we are grateful for the discoveries of modern science if psychology may be called a science. But these miracles are important too because it is clear that there is nothing psychosomatic about the turning of water into wine and I find it very instructive to see these miracles because they are the miracles that reveal to us that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God.

He does not perform some slight of hand. He does not simply understand psychological principles that we understand now and are able to imitate. But here is something that marks him out as different. The situation is an ancient marriage feast. Now people married, as you know, in different ways two thousand years ago in the land of Palestine. It was the custom for the fathers to make the marriages of their children. We all wonder how it would be if the parents made marriages instead of the children. Well I have a sneaking suspicion that it would probably be very much the

same, but as a father I've often wondered if it might not be better if the parents made marriages for their children than the children making them themselves. I don't know whether it would be or not, of course. I've been very fortunate in the fact that my son has married the young lady that I would want him to marry and my daughter has married the young man that I would want her to marry.

But nevertheless, I confess there was a time when I thought that perhaps I could do a better job. And I'm sure that most of us men and women think that we could do a better job for our children than our children seem to be doing for themselves. Well that's the way they did it. They made their marriages. And when the marriages were made they were considered to be married. And in fact, even if they had not lived together and one should die the man was considered to be a widower and if the young man died the young lady was considered to be a widow. The way in which the marriage was consummated was that after a period of time the bridegroom would come to the home of the bride and with his own marriage party, his friends, he would take the bride and the bride would in this marriage procession go with him and with her attendants to the place where they would be living and there they would have a big marriage feast. And the marriage feast might last even as long as a week. And they would celebrate the fact that a new life together was beginning.

Evidently it was something like this and it was in Cana of Galilee and that was Nathaniel's home. And Nathaniel has just been mentioned in the last part of John chapter 1, it's possible that they were all invited because Nathaniel was invited and knew the individuals who were being married. Our Lord came with a party of about seven, we would imagine because, you see, in the preceding chapter two of John's disciples were mentioned. One of them is said to be Andrew, the other we just surmised was the Apostle John. Andrew had gone out and had gotten his brother, Simon Peter, so that was three. And then remember, the Lord had found Philip and that was four. And Philip had gone and had found Nathaniel, and that's five. And then there was our Lord and Mary, the mother of our Lord, was with this party too. So it was a party of seven that arrived at the feast. And some have suggested that because the seven had arrived at the feast, that's why Mary said

they have no wine, or they lack wine because it was a relatively large party that arrived with the Lord and that produced the lack of wine.

At any rate, Mary made the request implicit in the statement, “They have no wine.” One wonders about this request by Mary because you must remember that Mary, the mother of our Lord, had lived for approximately thirty years with a secret that only she and Joseph and our Lord could have fully understood. After all, so far as the world was concerned our Lord might well have been regarded as an illegitimate son for thirty years. In fact, there are some evidences in the Gospel of John that indicate that that’s the way the people regarded him.

And so she was anxious for vindication, she knew the angel had appeared to her and had said to her, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, the power of the highest shall overshadow thee, wherefore also that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” It would be only human and natural for her to long for vindication for her and for our Lord and for Joseph. So it’s very possible that she was very anxious for vindication and approached our Lord and said, “They have no wine.” After all, just in the preceding few days and weeks several remarkable things had happened. The Lord had been baptized by John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove had come down upon him, and they had heard the voice from heaven, “This is my beloved Son in whom I’m well pleased.” Furthermore, they had heard of the remarkable incident of the call of Nathaniel in which our Lord said, “Nathaniel, I saw you under the fig tree.” Now Nathaniel was not in the presences of our Lord, our Lord knew he had been under the fig tree and not only that, he seemed to understand what passage he was reading under that fig tree, the place of mediation.

So they were filled with hints of the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ and perhaps Mary, with her desire to be vindicated, thinking that here is an opportunity for him to manifest himself to be what she at least had some inkling that he was different, perhaps the Messiah. She said to him, “They have no wine.” Mary had gone through her life under suspicion, anxious now to have vindication, gives this implicit statement, really a question: “Won’t you do something about it?”

The Lord’s reply is striking, particularly striking to us because in our English version we’ve all read over and over again this statement, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.” It sounds to me as if that were a rebuke. But I do not think that it is a very strong rebuke and the rebuke is a spiritual rebuke and certainly not an emotional or personal rebuke. This was simply the rejection of the natural relationship. He just wants to be sure that she understands that she does not have the right to call upon him to perform miracles at this time in the same sense that she will have when the cross has taken place.

So, “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” That’s the thing that the demons said of the Lord Jesus Christ, “What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? We know Thee who Thou art, the Son of God.” So it was an acknowledgement of no harmony, or no intimacy, or no relationship. “Woman, what am I to do with thee?”

It’s difficult to give the true sense of this word “woman.” That’s literally what the Greek text says but in English today it sounds so much like a rebuke that we want to change it and so translators have sought to find something a little bit different. I think you’ll find in some renderings, “Madam, what have I to do with thee?” But I don’t know that I know any individual who has ever called his mother “madam”. Madam. Madam, would you fix breakfast for me? Madam, could I have a sandwich?, or something like that. That just does not sound correct. If we say “lady”, well lady is the term that tramps use for women now. Perhaps it’s best just to leave it as it is, “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” There is the sense of the rebuke and the sense of the reminder of the fact that Mary is going to have to have a relationship to him like other men and women who do not — who are not divine beings. She’s going to have to realize that the right to call upon him is a right bound up in redemption. Mary understood the fact that she was a sinner like other women and other men. She said her soul rejoiced in God her savior, which indicated that she recognized that she was a sinner. And so this, then, is a statement that is partially a rebuke of the request, reminding her that the time is not yet but at the same time no personal rebuke of his mother.

“Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.” When the hour comes then you can call upon me like that. Now you read through the rest of the Gospel of John, and I hope that you who are listening to me expound this gospel will be reading it over and over again. You will get a whole lot more out of our study of the gospel if you are more familiar with it. You’ll find that this is one of the characteristic expressions of the Gospel of John, “Mine hour.” “Mine hour” on the lips of our Lord in the Gospel of John is a reference to the time of the cross. “Mine hour is not yet come.” He will say in chapter 8 his hour is not yet come. In chapter 17 in the high priestly prayer given from the standpoint of the accomplishment of his work, for he says, “I have finished the work that Thou gavest me to do.” He says, “The hour is come.” And so the coming of the hour is the coming of the cross. And then when redemption is accomplished then Mary and all of the redeemed are able to call upon him. But we are not able to call upon him for the completion of tasks until then in the final sense.

Well Mary’s response is the response of obedience. His mother saith unto the servants, “Whatever he saith unto you, do it.” Notice it is, “Whatever he saith unto you,” not, “Whatever I saith unto you, do it.” Mary acknowledges the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary acknowledges the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Whatever he says unto you, do it. Now for those of you who have the highest of regard for the Virgin Mary, well I want to acknowledge that I do too. Mary, the Scriptures say, was blessed among women. When Gabriel appeared to her he said, “Blessed art thou among women.” He did not say, incidentally, above women but, “Blessed art though among women.” He also said, “Blessed,” for Mary was the recipient of blessing, not the purveyor of blessings. So, “So blessed art thou among women,” a holy, godly woman. And so in that sense we honor Mary and we honor her faith, and we honor the things that she has taught us by her actions. And one of the things that she teaches us by her actions is to regard him as supreme. It is only in our Lord Jesus that we have redemption.

Many years ago I traveled to Rome, Italy and as I made plans to go I had a conversation with a friend of mine who was a professor of church history at a theological institution. And he said,

“Lewis, when you get to the city of Rome I want you to go see a church in which is contained a cross. On the front of the cross is the Lord Jesus Christ and on the other side of the same cross is Mary. Both on the cross.” He said the church is St. Mary’s of Maggiore. So when I went to Rome, in the midst of seeing the other things in the city, this was twenty years ago, over twenty years ago now, I made a special trip to St. Mary’s of Maggiore to look for this particular cross on which Mary was found as well as the Lord.

Well it was a large church, there were quite a few tourists who were there too and quite a few priests were there as well. And I wandered around over the building looking for this cross on which our Lord and Mary were to be found. Well I couldn’t find it. I went out in each of the little rooms, I looked everywhere I could, I opened every door that it was possible to open and could not find it. And finally there was a young priest that was coming along and so I stopped him and I said, “Where is the cross on which Mary is found with our Lord.” He said, “Oh, there is nothing like that here.” He said, “Mary doesn’t belong on the cross, our Lord belongs on the cross.” Well I thought that was an extremely good reply because that’s exactly what I would have said, Mary didn’t belong on the cross, our Lord belonged on the cross. And so I was happy to hear him say this but nevertheless I felt that my friend was a man of integrity and he went out of his way to say be sure and go there. I just still had a sneaking suspicion it was there.

Now this priest was an American who was attached to that particular church for a period of months and so it’s possible he really did not know that it was there because I finally decided well perhaps it’s out in the church yard. It’s a large church, it covers, as I remember now, about a city block. There were a fence, a wall, around the side of the church and then the churchyard and then the church. And so I wandered all around and finally I found it. It was there. It was there all along. And the young man who was the priest did not know it or else he didn’t want me to see it. I think he just did not know it. But there on the cross was our Lord Jesus and then on the backside of the cross on the other side, as you walked around the other side, there was Mary on the cross as well. Almost in anticipation of doctrine that perhaps Mary had a part in redemption as well. And as you



know, there has been a great deal of discussion over the question of whether Mary is a coredemptrix with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, it's Mary who says, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” It is Mary herself who also acknowledges the supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now the resultant action is very interesting, the Lord reacts and there are set nearby six water pots of stone after the manner of the purifying of the Jews. That's an interesting statement and I think important because here in the marriage feast there were these water pots and specific mention is made of the fact that they were the water pots that were used in the ritual cleansing of Judaism. I think that's important because this will be used as evidence of the fact that Judaism cannot do what our Lord Jesus Christ is able to do now that the ages are in process of changing.

These water pots that were there, six of them, contained anywhere from about fifteen to twenty-five or twenty-seven gallons apiece. It has been estimated as a top that they contained twenty-seven gallons apiece and then various figures down to as low as ten. Most of the commentators have come to the conclusion that there were between sixty and one hundred and fifty gallons of water in those six water pots. That suggests the greatness of the gifts that our Lord Jesus is able to give. If there were about one hundred and fifty gallons what we have here is twenty-four hundred servings of wine.

Now have you noticed so far and did you notice in the Scripture reading that there are no actions of our Lord described in this sign which is the frontispiece of the gospel? Nothing is done by our Lord. Everything is accomplished by his creative word. Now we have read in chapter 1, verse 1, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.” And then we read, “And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” And now we've heard Mary saying, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” And all our Lord does here is speak and mighty miracles are performed. He does not do anything other than to speak. “Fill the water pots with water,” he says. They fill them up to the brim and then he said, “Draw some out now and take it to the governor of the feast.”

Well when the governor of the feast tastes the wine he's greatly impressed. He didn't know its source or origin, the people who brought it to him did. Evidently he didn't ask them. And so he immediately seeks out the bridegroom because something is different here. Now when I was going to college and a member of a fraternity in those days before prohibition, that tells you how long ago this was, it was the custom for the men in the fraternity -- you understand I never participated in anything like this -- but nevertheless it was the custom of the people in the fraternity to go out and illicitly purchase corn whiskey. Now they would purchase it after nine o'clock from the back of a grocery store in Charleston, South Carolina and that whiskey was then the source of a great deal of quote, “joy,” unquote at the meetings, the social meetings, of the fraternity.

Now if someone happened to have some whiskey that was produced in a nicer way -- that is, bottled which they had managed to steal into the country some way -- that was regarded as good whiskey. This was regarded as not quite so good, to use a more euphemistic expression. But it was not uncommon for individuals to begin parties with that which was best. And then as that vanished to proceed to drink that which was worse because by then you didn't particularly care what it was so long as it had a certain effect upon you. [Laughter] Mind you, this is all from observation that I am giving. [Laughter] So anyway, there is something so true to human nature in this that I confess the first time I ever read this I said, “This account is authentic.” Because this is exactly what happens. The governor was startled, here it is near the end of the feast, evidently, and the best wine is saved for then.

So he spoke to the bridegroom, he sought him out. He said every man -- by the way, that bears a little emphasis in the Greek text, “Every man at that beginning that set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.” Every man does it this way. It's almost as if his words are a form of acknowledgement of supremacy in the case of our Lord even though he may not have intended it to be so. Every man does it this way but you've done it in a way that's not like men. So the words themselves suggest the significance of the work of Lord even though he does not, as I say, understand this yet.

Well after the statement we read in the concluding statement, “This is the beginning of that which Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.” Glory: in what way is the glory of the Lord Jesus manifested here? Well let’s begin by simply pointing out the force of the term “sign”, for we do read here this, “Beginning of miracles.”

Now you know there are different words in the New Testament for miracles. There is, and in your reading of the Bible you’ve noticed “wonder”, “miracle”, “sign”. There are some other words that are used of the miraculous events of the New Testament. But this is a word that John seems to specialize in: sign. Now a *semeion*, for that’s the Greek word that is rendered “sign”, is — by the way, that is derived from a word that means to signify in a symbolic way, *semeion* the verb means something like that. It means to communicate in symbol form. It can, of course, mean simply to communicate but frequently means to communicate in symbol form and since it’s the word sign it’s almost like our English -- if I could make up an English word -- to sign-ify something. Well we say signify, of course, but if we say sign-ify then you’ll get the idea of communication by means of a sign.

In other words, John sees miracles not simply as exhibitions of our Lord’s power but he sees them as exhibitions of our Lord’s power which are designed to teach us certain spiritual truth. So this is a miracle that is a teaching miracle in John’s case. The word means simply it’s a sign or a miracle as a proof of his divine authority and his majesty. And this is a word that draws attention away from the sign itself to the doer of the sign. So we are to look at the miracle but we’re to ask also what does this mean spiritually. You may put it this way, it’s a work of power in the sphere of creation that points to truth in the sphere of redemption or truth in the sphere of the new creation. So it’s a work of power in the old creation, the physical creation, that’s designed to teach us things about the new creation or the sphere of redemption.

So when we see John’s signs we are to ask what does this sign mean spiritually. Let me illustrate, one of the signs that John will talk about in the 6th chapter is the feeding of the five thousand. Now the feeding of the five thousand with the little pieces of bread and fish is not designed simply to show us that our Lord is all powerful, but to show us spiritual truth. And so John

records the discourse that follows which is the discourse on the bread of life. And the Lord says, “I am the bread of life.” So the feeding of the five thousand with the loaves and the fishes, utterly impossible to do naturally, is designed to show that he is the bread of life. And that if we come to him and if we believe in him we will have everlasting life. So the physical sphere, the miracle in the physical sphere is designed to represent the spiritual benefits that flow from our Lord Jesus Christ’s work on the cross at Calvary, redemption.

Take another illustration in the 9th chapter, “He will heal the man born blind.” And then in that same context he had given the statements twice. He is the light of the world. So the giving of sight to the blind in the physical sphere is designed to represent the fact that he is the light of the world and gives spiritual illumination in that spiritual sphere. The final climactic miracle is the miracle of the restoration of Lazarus. And Lazarus is raised from the dead in the physical sphere because John would have us understand that the Lord Jesus in the spiritual sphere is able to give eternal life to people who are dead in trespasses and sins. And so in the context of the healing of Lazarus our Lord will say, “I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me (though he were dead like Lazarus) yet shall he live. And he that liveth and believeth in me (like you Martha and Mary) you shall never die (in the eternal sense).”

So the signs, then, are miracles in the natural sphere that are designed to express spiritual life. This is evident from the fact that everything else is in the background. Have you ever been to a wedding and you never even found out who the bridegroom was? Who was the bridegroom in this wedding? Oh I know what you’re saying, well after all a bridegroom is not important in a wedding. [Laughter] Well true enough. [Laughter] A bridegroom never feels so unimportant as he does at a wedding. Who cares the fellow who stands up front and smiles, [Laughter] why that’s evident from the fact that everybody turns around and looks away from him, looks at the bride. The bride is the important person at a wedding. Who was the bride here? Well, there is no evidence of any bride here. There was a bride but we don’t know her name, we don’t know anything about her. We don’t know anything about the bridegroom.

What was the relationship of Mary to this wedding? We do not know anything about that. Mary just suddenly appears in the account as present at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. Was Nathaniel the best man? He was from Cana of Galilee, we're later told in the Gospel of John. Was that the reason that our Lord was there, he invited him, come to the wedding, I'm the best man. We don't know. Everything is in the background. The important thing, the important person at this wedding is a guest, the Lord Jesus Christ. Strange wedding. But, you see, as William Hendrickson puts it, “In the full light of day stands Christ, all the rest is shadow.”

I gather from that that we are to learn some spiritual things about the Lord Jesus. He's the important person, that's the reason that John selects this particular sign for exposition. Now, there is a natural significance and also a typical significance in this wedding. In the first place it's a demonstration of the creative power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have here one of the signatures of his divinity. He is able to say, “Put water in those water pots,” and he is able to say now, “Draw some and take it to the governor of the feast,” and when the governor of the feast takes it he discovers that the water has been made wine. That's one of the signatures of divinity. No man can possibly do that. “The conscious water saw it's Lord and blushed,” one of the commentators said. That was the product of the mighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son who now, though he possesses human nature, is still the divine Son. That which he has been from ages past will be on into the ages of the future, he still is even though he has taken to himself an additional nature, a human nature.

So we see his creative power in this sign. We also see the fact that the Lord Jesus hallows family life. After all, he read the Bible like we read the Bible. He studied the Scriptures like we study the Scriptures. In his human nature he advanced in the knowledge of the word which he knew from ages past in his divine nature. He knew that the Scriptures say that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. He knew about the marriage relationship, he knew all that it signified, and he entered into this experience and in it we learned that he hallows family life. He regards this as legitimate human experience and himself enters into the experience of it as well. You

can see that the sacred interpenetrates the secular. For a Christian there is no such thing as a secular thing and a sacred thing, for the sacred interpenetrates everything: your business, your family life, your social life, all of your activities, even your sports, and your hobbies. All of those are activities in which the sacred interpenetrates what we call the secular. And then of course we see indicated naturally our Lord's approval of festive times. He didn't stand up and say, “Well I think they're going to be drinking wine there and I better not be associated with it and so I won't go.” No, as a matter of fact, our Lord not only went, it does not say that he drank wine, it just says that he provided sixty-two hundred and fifty gallons of wine.

Now the Scriptures, in my opinion, teach that wine is wine. Scriptures speak very strongly against drunkenness. Do not misunderstand. The Bible speaks very strongly against drunkenness. So far as I can tell the Bible does not say anything negative toward the drinking of a glass of wine. Wine in the Scriptures is set forth as a source of joy. It makes the heart of man glad. There are warnings against overuse as is proper. But so far as we can tell, wine was significant. It was called the blood of grapes and it is wine that is chosen to be representative of the blood of Christ through which the new covenant is established and we have the forgiveness of sins.

Our Lord approved festival times. He came and participated in the joy of the wedding feast. Some have pictured him as a pale Galilean and done great harm to Christianity because Christianity is not of that negative ascetic character. So he approved festive times and, I think as Christians, we should approve festive times and participate. But there is something even more significant than that and that's the typical significance of this incident. It seems to me that first and foremost this miracle put in the beginning of the Gospel of John, it's the first of the signs selected by the apostle, is designed to indicate inauguration of the new age with the coming of the Lord Jesus, the age of the law is passing away, the age of the fulfillment of all anticipated by the law is to come. The law came through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, John has said in the opening chapter. And here we have one of the indications of that. We have the water pots used in the Jewish ritual

and now the Lord Jesus transforms the water into the wine of the new covenant grace with it's forgiveness of sins.

I think there's some indications of the fact that this is the primary significance of the incident. This sign is not followed by discourse like many of the signs are. Therefore we are to interpret it in the light of the gospel as a whole. And what the gospel teaches as a whole is that with the coming of the Lord Jesus, the old age finds its fulfillment and culmination the new age begins with the sacrifice in which he completes the atonement for sin and consequently that, it seems to me, is the primary point of this particular incident. The aim is to show the inadequacy of Judaism and the adequacy of the Lord Jesus Christ and what he will bring in his death. And the fact that the water is turned into wine, the blood of grapes, underlines that.

“They have no wine,” suggests the inadequacy of Judaism to give us forgiveness of sins fully whereas the Lord Jesus supplying the wine suggests that he is able through his death to supply that which brings spiritual joy to individuals. In fact, the selection of the wine for the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is designed to remind us of the blood by which the new covenant is inaugurated and through which we have the forgiveness of sins and the joy of the Lord in knowing that our sins are forgiven.

And I think there is also some significance in the remark of the governor, “You have kept the good wine until now.” Well, what does that teach us? Why it teaches us simply this, that in Christianity we have the best of the wine of the divine revelation. There are great things in the Old Testament, there are great things in the law, there are great things in the revelation before the law. There are greater things in the new age and greater things still to be in the future. “The world's banquet runs out,” McLaren says. Christ supplies infinite gift, better every day with the best for the last. And in heaven, when we get to heaven we will say, “Thou hast kept the good wine until now.”

Isn't it great to be able to look forward to the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and realize that all of the good things that we have now are only anticipations of the better things that we shall have, not only when we get there but throughout all the ages of eternity? It just occurred to me at

this moment the statement in the 7th chapter of the Book of Revelation in which we read that the lamb shall shepherd the flock. Isn't that strange? The lamb shepherding the flock. You'd think the shepherd would shepherd the lamb but here is the lamb shepherding the flock and he leads his flock to living fountains of water. One fountain after another throughout the ages of eternity, the best wine still in the future always for us, magnificent conception.

Therefore, why should we look out on the world and rejoice in the things of the world? Many poor, deluded souls are ever finding that the world does the very opposite. It lures men into its trap by promising them great things for the immediate future, usually materialistic things. And so we fall for that. The dreariest thing in the world is to see an old man or an old woman godless and without Christ. And one of the most beautiful things in the world is to see an old man or an old woman in the calm sunset of life, glorying in the things of the Lord Jesus Christ, and glorifying the godly life with the joy of the Lord upon their countenances as they anticipate the better things that are yet to be. The Christian life is a steadily, progressively bettering life.

I'll tell you, when you read things like this you really feel that it is good to know him whom to know is life eternal. Now the story ended with no reference to the people. Isn't that strange? Not a thing is said here about the effect of this upon the people. But that's not surprising to any preacher who has preached the gospel because some of the greatest things in the world are preached such as I've preached to you this morning. There is nothing greater than that. But it is possible to sit and listen and to go out utterly unmoved in the midst of something that is the profoundest thing in the human life and experience, the gospel of Christ. Nothing is said about those who were there. I suggest that the silence is proof or evidence that the impression made by our Lord upon them was neither profound nor lasting. And the impression made upon many, many people, the vast majority of people, by the preaching of the gospel is neither profound nor lasting. There were some, however, who were touched: the people of God. We read, “And his disciples believed on him.”

Over twenty years ago I went to live in Edinburgh, Scotland. I love Edinburgh. I have often been there since, love that city. It's one of the cities that I look forward to seeing. I have



traipsed all over Edinburgh on my feet as well as in my automobile. I did not intend to seek out the home in which Sir James Simpson lived but I had heard of James Simpson, he was the man who invented chloroform. A very important discovery in its day. I still remember the place which has a plaque outside, “This is the home of the famous physician, Sir James Simpson, who discovered chloroform.” Well someone asked Mr. Simpson one time the question, “What do you consider the greatest discovery you ever made?” Without a moment’s hesitation he replied, “That I have a savior.” That’s putting things in their proper place. That I have a savior, the greatest discovery, all other great discoveries secondary. Do you have a savior? Do you know that you have the forgiveness of sins? Do you recognize your sinful condition and our Lord’s work of redemption of the shedding of his blood for sinners? Have you come to Christ? Have you received his salvation? It comes as a free gift to those who will acknowledge their need and receive it as a free gift. Actually, all God requires is the acknowledgement and the reception in faith of what Christ has done for sinners. Come to him, believe in him, rest in him. Having come to him you may rest in him for time and for eternity. The joy begins now but it increases as the years go by and the best is yet to be.

[Prayer] O heavenly Father, we are grateful to Thee again for the manifestation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We sense that glory as we read these ancient accounts. And we sense from our own experience that the things that are said in Holy Scripture are really true. And we ask Lord that if there may be some here who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ that today may be that day. Come to Christ, is the call of the Holy Spirit. May, O God, there be answer...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**