

Worksheet #3: John 2:1–25

Summary: In chapter 2, the action begins in the small town of Cana, located about 6 km north of Nazareth.¹ This begins the “Cana Cycle” in John’s gospel, a sequence of episodes that begins and ends (4:46) there. All of the events in this chapter, including the temple cleansing, appear only in John’s gospel. A close comparison of the temple cleansing here (2:13–22) with the temple cleansing in the Synoptics (Matt. 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–18; Luke 19:45–48) reveals that Jesus must have cleansed the temple on two occasions—once during the early part of his ministry (as recorded here) and once more on the Monday of the Passion Week (as recorded in the Synoptics).

The events in this chapter are important because they are the first two of the seven signs that occur in John’s Gospel. While the other six signs are undisputed, there is some debate about whether the temple cleansing itself should be identified as one of John’s “signs.” Several possible candidates have been proposed for John’s seventh sign, yet the temple clearing is the only one that seems to be identified as a “sign” in the text (although this identification is somewhat indirect).²

Abbreviated Outline³ (current passage in bold):

- I. INTRODUCTION: THE WORD MADE FLESH (1:1-18)
- II. THE BOOK OF SIGNS: THE SIGNS OF THE MESSIAH (1:19-12:50)
 - A. *The Forerunner and the Coming of the Messiah (1:19-51)*
 - 1. The Testimony of John the Baptist (1:19-34)
 - 2. The Beginning of Jesus’ Ministry (1:35-51)
 - B. ***The Cana Cycle: Jesus’ Inaugural Signs and Representative Conversations (2:1-4:54)***
 - 1. **Sign 1: Changing Water into Wine at the Wedding in Cana (2:1-12)**
 - 2. **Sign 2: One of Jesus’ Jerusalem Signs: The Clearing of the Temple (2:13-22)**
 - 3. Representative Conversations: Nicodemus the Jewish Ruler, the Samaritan Woman (2:23-4:42)
 - 4. Sign 3: The Second Sign in Cana: The Healing of the Royal Official’s Son (4:43-54)
 - C. *The Festival Cycle: Additional Signs amidst Mounting Unbelief (5-10)*
 - 1. Sign 4 at an Unnamed Feast in Jerusalem: The Healing of the Lame Man (5:1-47)
 - 2. Sign 5: Galilean Passover: Feeding the Multitude and Bread of Life Discourse (6:1-71)
 - 3. Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1-8:59)
 - 4. Sign 6: The Healing of the Blind Man and the Good Shepherd Discourse (9-10)
 - D. *Final Passover: Climactic Sign, the Raising of Lazarus, and Other Events (11-12)*
 - 1. Sign 7: The Raising of Lazarus (11)
 - 2. Final Events of Jesus’ Public Ministry (12)
- III. THE BOOK OF EXALTATION: PREPARING THE NEW MESSIANIC COMMUNITY AND THE PASSION OF JESUS (13-20)
 - A. *The Cleansing and Instruction of the New Covenant Community, including Jesus’ Final Prayer (13-17)*
 - B. *The Passion Narrative (18-19)*
 - C. *Jesus’ Resurrection and Appearances, Commissioning of Disciples (20:1-29)*
 - D. *Concluding Purpose Statement (20:30-31)*
- IV. EPILOGUE: THE COMPLEMENTARY ROLES OF PETER AND THE BELOVED DISCIPLE (21)
 - A. *Jesus’ Third Appearance, to Seven Disciples in Galilee (21:1-14)*
 - B. *Jesus and Peter (21:15-19)*
 - C. *Jesus and the Disciple Jesus Loved (1:20-25)*

¹ J. D. Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Cana,” (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996).

² Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 326–335.

³ Adapted from Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 307–308.

Interpretation: *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Why is it significant that Jesus' "hour" has not yet arrived (2:4)?

2. How does the transformation of ordinary water into real wine (2:9–10) display Christ's glory (as 2:11 claims)?

3. Identify a characteristic of a "sign" as described in 2:11. What does a sign do? In this case, what occurred as a result?

4. How does Psalm 69:9 (quoted in 2:17) explain Jesus' actions in 2:13–16?

5. When the Jews ask for a sign (2:18), what event does Jesus describe in response (2:19)? How does this imply that the temple clearing is itself the sign that they requested?

6. What does 2:24–25 tell us about the quality of the people's "belief" described in 2:23?

Application: *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

7. What does this passage tell us about Jesus? How does it help us to understand "his place in the sweep of redemptive history"?⁴

8. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?

9. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

⁴ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 102.