

Armagh Baptist Church
Sunday 21st June 2009 – 7:00pm
“The Significance of the Signs” John 2:1-23

Introduction

I'd like to start tonight by reminding you of John's Purpose for writing His Gospel. It is found at the end of the Book in John 20:30-31...

*‘Jesus did many other **miraculous signs** in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.’*

In other words, John left a lot of Jesus' life story out, but what he did record, he did so for a purpose – that we would be convinced about who Jesus is...

- The Christ (or Messiah)
- The Son of God

...and that we would come to believe in Him and have eternal life.

John only included 7 of Jesus' miracles in this Gospel, but notice what he calls them – in Jn 2:11, 18 & 23, and in Jn 20:30 – he calls them '**signs**'.

That's because for John, Jesus' miracles signified beyond any shadow of doubt who Jesus really was – He was the Messiah, the Son of God!

But then if you were listening this morning as I preached from Acts ch.3, the idea of a miracle being referred to as a **sign** shouldn't come as too much of a surprise. The Apostles performed **signs and wonders**, and I said that the lame man being able to jump and leap and praise God, was the fulfillment of an OT Prophecy from Isaiah 35. That prophecy speaks of the fact that in that Day, when the Messiah would come, *‘the lame would leap like a deer!’*

So the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, was a sign to the watching Jewish crowd that their Messiah had come. Likewise here in John ch.2 as Jesus performs his first miracle in this Gospel – the changing of water into wine – we should see this as a sign that Jesus was the Messiah. He had come, and he was not only the Messiah, but he was also the Son of God.

Now as I began to study John ch.2 I wondered at first what the **wedding in Cana of Galilee** in vs.1-11 had to do with **Jesus clearing the Temple** in vs.13-18. But then I spotted the connection – it's one little word that ties this chapter together – it is the word '**sign**'. It appears in v.11, v.18 and v.23.

I think there is also some significance in the fact that the first miracle that Jesus did here in John 2 is set side by side with his first clearing of the Temple – because it had become a corrupt religious institution – no longer a place that carried on the true worship of the living God.

Likewise, when the Apostles carried out their first miracle in Acts ch.3 it is at the Gate of the Temple, so that their miracle would be a sign to testify against all that was going on inside that corrupt establishment.

So both the miracles that Jesus did and the miracles that the Apostles did were signs aimed at the Jewish people – and particularly at the religious leaders in the Temple. They were supposed to see from these signs that their Messiah had come, but sadly most of them refused to accept the evidence or to believe in Him as their Saviour.

So bearing that in mind, I hope that none of us here will miss the signs that God has given to us – We have all the evidence that we need to help us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and that by believing in his name we might have eternal life.

So let's come to John 2v.1-11 and let's see...

1. Jesus Performing His First Sign (v.1-11)

This coming Thursday I will be performing my first wedding ceremony in this church, as Joanne and Neville tie the knot. I have been doing some marriage preparation classes with them and with 2 other couples over the last 3 Monday nights, and last Monday night we were looking at this passage. It is encouraging to know that Jesus took time out to be at a wedding. We're not told whose wedding it was, but Mary seems to be well known as one of the guests, so it must have been some family connection.

Jesus and his disciples were also there as invited guests.

So we can conclude that Jesus valued the idea of marriage.

Marriage between one man and one woman was established by God away back in the O.T. – in fact as far back as Creation itself, when God created a woman, a wife, out of a rib that he had taken from Adam's side. He gave the woman to Adam and he called her Eve, and then we read,

'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh' (Gen 2:24).

When Jesus goes to the wedding in Cana of Galilee, he establishes marriage as not just a **Creation Ordinance**, but as a **Christian**

Ordinance too! It's not just a **Cultural thing** as some people think, that we can take it or leave it. Marriage has been ordained by God, and Jesus endorsed it by being present at this wedding in Cana of Galilee. But it's interesting that although Jesus was probably present at the wedding *ceremony* itself, it is the *reception* that becomes the focus of attention in John ch.2. Someone had got the details wrong in preparation for this particular reception, and the host (the bride's father) was about to be left with egg on his face. They had run out of wine!

For some reason, we are not told why, it is Jesus' mother who tells Jesus about the problem. To which Jesus said, '*Why do you involve me?*' or almost, '*What's that got to do with me?*' But then he says a strange thing: '*My time has not yet come*' or '*My hour has not yet come.*'

In other words, Jesus is referring to the moment at which he would be revealed to the watching world as the Messiah. '*My hour has not yet come.*'

But Mary is not put off – She simply says to the servants, '*Do whatever he tells you.*' (v.5). She still believes something is going to happen, and he will be able to solve this problem.

But how much wine are we talking about here?

Well, we're told in v.6: '*Nearby stood six stone water jars – the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from 20 to 30 gallons!*'

So rough calculation: 20 – 30 gallons in 6 jars.

That's about 150 gallons.

Or about 700 litre-bottles full of wine!

(To give you an idea - a fill of home heating oil is usually 900 litres!!)

That's a lot of wine for a long celebration that in those times could have lasted for weeks!

Well Jesus now steps in and begins to give the instructions:

(v.7) – '*Fill the jars with water.*' So they filled them to the brim.

(v.8) – '*Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet!*'
As we say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, so it's taken to the master of ceremonies to taste.

(v.9) – The verdict? '*This is the best!*'

(v.10) '*Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper*

wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.'

And that's where the saying, keeping the best wine till the last comes from.

So not only had Jesus performed his first miracle, but '*His Glory had been revealed*' for the first time. (v.11).

His glory – (who he really was) – had not been overly evident in his childhood. Yes, his knowledge was noticeable as a 12 yr old when he was left behind at the Temple by his mother and Joseph by mistake. But he had not demonstrated his greatness or who he was before now – in Cana.

Up until now, his disciples had just believed other people's testimonies about Jesus, (as we saw last time – as John the Baptist witness brought Andrew to Christ, who in turn brought Simon and Philip to Christ too.)

But now Jesus reveals his glory – just as John had said in ch.1:14

'We have seen his glory – the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father – full of grace and truth!'

Jesus was revealing to those watching something of the glory of God: Only the Creator God could change water into wine.

This was a genuine miracle – it had never happened before and it has never happened since – this was a one-off.

The laws of science and nature were suspended for a moment – that equals a miracle. And it was performed by the Creator Himself!

Only the God who made the world out of nothing, could change water into wine. And so...

- A miracle was performed
- His glory was revealed
- And so His Disciples put their faith in Him (v.11)

That's exactly what this miraculous sign was supposed to do.

This miracle confirmed to them, who Jesus was.

The testimonies they had heard from others, were true.

So now with renewed confidence, they put their trust in Him, believing with newfound assurance who Jesus really was – the Messiah, the Son of God!

It was enough for the disciples, but why was it not enough for the Jews?

2. The Jews ask for a Sign. (vs.13-18)

The second mention of this word 'sign' is in v.18.

This time it's the Jews who are asking for a sign from Jesus.

Jesus, his mother, his brothers and his disciples have moved on to Capernaum in v.12, where they stayed for a few days. But then in v.13 they moved on down to Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover Feast.

(i) The Jews' Question (v.18)

'What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?'

(ii) What had prompted them to ask this question? (v.14-16)

Well Jesus had just come in and cleared the Temple! Why?

(v.14) What He saw:

He saw men making a business out of religion!

(e.g. Paddy Harney in Waterford – in the Franciscan Friary)

(e.g. Leslie Hale – Glengormley, etc, etc)

(v.15) What He did:

He made a whip out of cords

He drove the businessmen and animals out of the Temple.

He poured out their money and overthrew their tables.

Here we see a glimpse of God's wrath – his righteous anger.

This wasn't just, 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild' – this was a strong man!

(v.16) What He said:

'How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!'

No-one would have referred to the Temple as his 'father's house' – only Jesus did. He was claiming God was His Father – and therefore He was claiming to be God's Son.

It's at this point that the penny drops for his disciples. In v.17 they remember another prophecy from the O.T. Psalm 69:9

'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

Jesus was passionate about God's house – the Temple – and about what went on there. Either it brought glory to God, or it dishonoured God. Certainly the way the Jewish religion of that time had fallen into a money-making racket – there was no way that it was glorifying to God, and that's why Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and threw them out of the Temple.

But that's why the Jews asked for this sign in v.18. They demanded of him:

'What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority

to do all this?'

They were looking for his credentials:

- Proof of his authority?
- Who was he?
- What right had he got to do what he'd just done in the Temple?

These Jewish leaders were so blind, they would only believe who he was if they saw a miracle, or at least that's what they said:

- They didn't believe who he was.
- They didn't believe that the Temple was his father's house.
- Or that he had the right to clear it!

Even though the disciples could see that zeal for the Temple was a sign of who he was based on their knowledge of Psalm 69:9!

So the Jews demanded that Jesus produce a sign to prove who he was.

3. The Greatest Sign of all (v.19-22)

The Jews had asked Jesus for a sign to prove beyond doubt who he was and by what authority he had cleared the Temple.

So we have

(i) Jesus' answer in v.19

'Destroy this Temple, and I will raise it again in three days!'

That would be the sign he would give them of who he was, and of his authority.

(ii) The Jews' Confusion (v.20)

'It has taken 46 years to build this Temple, and you are going to raise it in 3 days!'

The Jews totally misunderstood Jesus. They thought he meant that he was going to destroy the Temple in Jerusalem, take it down stone by stone – a structure that had taken 46 years to build – and that he was going to rebuild it in just 3 days! How could he do that?

(iii) What did Jesus mean? (v.21)

Well, John tells us in v.21 – Jesus was referring to his own body – not

the stone building – as a Temple. Remember John 1:14 *‘The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us for a while.’* In a very real sense his body was the Temple of God.

In fact they should have listened more carefully to the words that Jesus used:

- He didn't say, 'I will destroy this Temple...'
- He just said, 'Destroy this Temple...'
- He didn't say **he** would do it, and he did say **'this Temple'**
- It would be the Jews who would destroy his Temple – his body, by handing him over to the Romans to be put to death on the cross.
- And he didn't say he would *rebuild* it in 3 days, he said he would **raise** it in 3 days.

So Jesus was implying that the Jews would destroy his body by having him crucified, but 3 days later he would rise again from the dead in resurrection!

The Resurrection was the greatest miraculous sign of all.

It proved beyond any shadow of doubt that Jesus was the Messiah – the Son of God.

(iv) The Effect this sign had (v.22)

*'After he was **raised** from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture **and the words that Jesus had spoken.**'*

So the resurrection did indeed prove to the disciples who Jesus was. But it should be proof to us all that Jesus was God's Son.

It is proof that God the Father has accepted Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins, on our behalf. (Acts 2:32-33; 36-39).

So the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day from the dead is the greatest sign / proof of all:

- Jesus is God's Son
- Jesus does have authority over death
- Jesus has defeated sin
- So Jesus can be our Saviour, if we will only trust him!

Back in v.11 after the changing of the water into wine, the disciples **put their faith in Jesus**, having seen the first miraculous sign that Jesus performed.

Down in v.22 having seen his last sign – his resurrection from the dead – we're told that, *'they **believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.**'*

To believe in Jesus is to put your faith in Jesus – it's to Trust in Him.

Conclusion

What effect will these signs have on you tonight?

Do you believe that:

- Jesus is God's Son
- Jesus died on the Cross for your sins
- Jesus rose again from the dead on the third day.
- He has been triumphant over death, sin and hell
- He lives today to be your Saviour.

Do you know Him?

Have you put your trust in Him?

Have you believed in His Name?

Do you rely upon Him for your Salvation?

Let me finish with v.23:

*'Now while Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, **many people saw the miraculous signs** he was doing and **believed in his name.**'*

Some people say – all that God stuff – all that religion
– sure we don't have any proof that any of it is true!

**These signs prove who Jesus is –
The onus is now on you to believe and accept him as your Saviour.**

