

'Signs of life'

The seven 'signs' in the public ministry of Jesus

"Jesus performed many other 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."

[John 20.30f]

John records seven incidents during the public ministry of Jesus which he describes as 'signs'. 'Signs', as John presents them, both *authenticate* (see Acts 2.22 for a similar perspective) and *illustrate*: that's to say they point clearly to who Jesus is and the significance of what He has come to do.

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1.

".. you have saved the best till now .."

John 2.1-11

The first 'sign' recorded by John centres on a wedding in a remote village in Galilee, in northern Israel. It's an 'out-of-the-way' place and the individuals involved are 'non-descript'.

Although the 'sign' sees Jesus responding to a very practical need (and it's good to be reminded that He is both able and pleased to meet us in the very practical needs which we can sometimes face!), we're meant to see something more than simply that: it's a 'signpost' pointing us to a greater reality.

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1. Read John 2.1-11. This passage is often read at weddings and you may thus be quite familiar with it. Try not to let that familiarity with the passage stop you reading it as if for the first time!

What do you think is the significance of John recording this as the *first* of the 'signs' Jesus did?

To what great reality does this 'sign' point us? What for you is the 'take-away' message of the passage?

2. Read John 2.1-5. These opening verses set the scene, and provide the context, for the narrative which will follow.

What lessons might we learn from the setting which is recorded in vv.1-2?

What significance do you think John means us to take from the Mary's statement that "*they have no more wine*"?

Why does Jesus respond to Mary as He does (v.4)?

3. Read John 2.6-8. Jesus gives very specific instructions to the servants: John means us to see that the details are significant.

What symbolism do you think we're meant to see in the 6 stone water jars which are used?

How does John underline the *abundance* in the new life which Jesus comes to bring (see John 10.10)?

4. Read John 2.9-11. The climax to the narrative sees the master of the banquet astonished at not just the abundance, but the *excellence* of the 'new' wine. Faith involves both *believing* (as the disciples did) and *tasting* (as the master of the banquet did with the wine):

What is the 'glory' of Jesus which this 'sign' revealed?

In the symbolism of the narrative, what is the 'water' which has been turned into 'wine'?

To what extent have you '*tasted the water that has been turned into wine*'?