

Dr. David L. Turner, John, Session 4,

John 1:19-2:12

6-Min. Video Overview

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So, today, we're going to dive into a really foundational story from the Gospel of John. This is the story that, honestly, sets the stage for everything that comes after. We're going to see how the whole narrative kicks off, moving from this lone voice out in the desert to the very first sign that starts to peel back the layers on who Jesus really is.

And to really get this, we're going to take some advice from the scholar Dr. David Turner. He talks about avoiding the plaque-ifying of the text. You know what he means, right? It's when we just pull out the famous one-liners, put them on a plaque, and forget they're part of a bigger story.

So instead, we're going to look at this the way it was meant to be read. As a single, flowing narrative, with characters, real tension, and a plot that builds. Alright, so our story doesn't actually begin with Jesus.

Kinda surprising, right? It starts with his forerunner, John the Baptist. And the first scene? It's basically an interrogation. You've got this official delegation of priests and Levites sent all the way from Jerusalem out into the middle of nowhere, and they have one very urgent question for him.

Now, this question- who are you- it isn't just idle curiosity. You have to understand, the authorities back in Jerusalem were terrified of any kind of popular movement that even smelled like a messianic uprising. Another self-proclaimed messiah could get the Romans involved, and that would be a total disaster for everyone.

So when they're asking, "Who are you, what they're really asking is, "Are you a threat to us? So these officials, they show up with like a mental checklist of all the potential troublemakers. Okay, are you the messiah, the Christ? John says no. Alright, fine.

Are you Elijah? We heard he was supposed to come back. Nope. Okay, what about the prophet, the one Moses promised us? No.

It's incredible. John defines himself first by who he isn't, just systematically shutting down every single one of their expectations. So if he's not any of those guys, who on earth is he? Well, John's answer comes straight from the prophet Isaiah.

He says he's just a voice. Think about that. He's not the main event.

He's the warm-up act. He's not the king. He's the guy yelling from the side of the road that the king is coming.

His entire identity is wrapped up in preparing the way for someone else. And this right here, this is the absolute core of John's mission. We see it play out in the story.

He literally points his own followers away from himself and tells them to go follow Jesus. I mean, that is a wild act of humility. His personal success is actually measured by how much his own influence shrinks while Jesus's grows.

So after making it crystal clear who he isn't, John gives Jesus his first huge title in this gospel, the Lamb of God. And wow, this phrase is packed with meaning. For anyone listening back then, it would have instantly brought to mind Israel's entire sacrificial system, and especially the Passover Lamb, the one whose blood saved the people from death in Egypt.

John is making an absolutely massive theological statement right out of the gate. So once John gives his testimony, the camera sort of pans over. The focus of the story shifts to Jesus, and we see him start to gather his very first disciples.

But here's the thing: it doesn't happen at some big public rally with a powerful sermon. It's much quieter. It's like a chain reaction of one person telling another.

Let's just trace this little chain. It's pretty cool. First, John the Baptist points out Jesus to two of his own guys.

One of them, Andrew, is so excited he immediately runs to find his brother, Simon. The next day, Jesus calls Philip. And what does Philip do? He goes and finds his buddy, Nathanael.

It's this super organic, person-to-person movement. And this leads to one of my favorite exchanges in the whole story. Nathaniel is a total skeptic.

Nazareth was this tiny, backwater town nobody cared about. His reaction is basically, "You're kidding, right? That guy? From Nazareth? No way. And Philip's response is just brilliant.

He doesn't get into a big theological debate. He doesn't argue. He just says, "Come and see.

The invitation isn't to believe a list of facts; it's to have a personal experience. And then, boom. In just a couple of days, there's this absolute flood of titles being thrown at Jesus.

John calls him the sacrificial lamb of God. Andrew sees him as the Messiah, a political liberator. Nathanael, the guy who was just making fun of his hometown, now calls him son of God and king of Israel.

And then Jesus throws his own title into the mix: the mysterious Son of Man. All these different titles are swirling around, and the expectations are just piling up like crazy. Okay, so all of this builds to the climax of the opening act.

Jesus, his mom, and his brand new disciples all get invited to a wedding in a little village called Cana. Now, a wedding back then wasn't a one-night affair. It was a huge, multi-day party, the social event of the year for these families.

And they're about to have a major, major problem. We really have to understand the stakes here. When they run out of wine, it's not just like, oh, bummer, the party's over.

No, this was a catastrophe. In that culture, wine was a basic staple of life and celebration. Running out was a complete failure of hospitality.

It would bring a deep, lasting shame on the families that hosted the wedding. So when his mother comes to him with a problem, Jesus' response sounds, well, kind of harsh, doesn't it? But his reason is the key. My hour has not yet come.

Now, throughout the entire Gospel of John, that phrase, the hour, is like a code word. It always, always points to one specific future event, the moment of his crucifixion. He knows that performing a big public sign is going to kickstart a chain of events that leads directly to the cross, and he's saying the time for that hasn't arrived just yet.

But of course, Jesus does act, just quietly, and how he acts tells us everything about his mission. See, he doesn't just snap his fingers and make wine appear. He very specifically tells them to fill up stone jars that were used for Jewish ritual purification, and that's the water he turns into wine.

The symbolism is just so powerful. He is literally taking the old way of religious duty and cleansing, and replacing it with the new, overflowing joy and abundance of God's kingdom. Something the prophets often compared to a giant feast with tons of wine.

And look at this little detail the author makes sure to include. There were six stone jars. He doesn't just say some jars; he tells us they were the ones used for ceremonial washing.

That's no accident. It's to show us that Jesus is taking the very tools of the old religious system and turning them into vessels of something totally new and celebratory. So you have to ask why.

Why does the Gospel of John choose this particular miracle to kick off the whole public story of Jesus? It's because this event is meant to be the template, the master key, for understanding every single thing Jesus does from this point forward. The book itself tells us why he does these signs, as John calls them. They're not just magic tricks to impress people.

They have two very specific goals. First, to reveal Jesus' glory, to give people a peek behind the curtain at who he really is, and second, to inspire faith in the people who see them. They are acts of revelation that basically demand a response from you.

So here is the bottom line, the thing we absolutely have to get. The wedding at Cana isn't just a nice story about Jesus saving a party. It's the interpretive lens for the entire book.

Every other sign, every teaching that follows, is meant to be seen through this framework. Jesus has come to replace the old with the new, to bring God's lavish future blessing right into our present moment. And that leaves us with a really great question to chew on, doesn't it? This story- this is just the beginning, the very first of the signs.

It reveals his glory by turning the water of ritual into the wine of celebration. So it just makes you wonder, if that was the first sign, what on earth would the final, ultimate sign have to be to reveal his glory in its absolute fullness?