THE QUESTION

What did the early church teach about the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11)?

Asked by a THF member on September 15, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 9 numbered quotations · the 18 early Christian passages and 90 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-the-early-church-teach-about-the-wedding-at-cana-john-2-1-11

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

The early writers read Cana as a real miracle that showed Christ's glory and His power over creation. Irenaeus saw the same Creator giving better wine through His Son, waiting for the hour the Father had set. Others warned it did not permit drunkenness, and linked the wine to the Lord's cup and to Christ's marriage with the Church.

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POINT 1 OF 8

Christ's first sign revealed His glory

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tatian's harmony of the Gospels retells the scene: the wine runs out, Jesus has the jars filled with water, and the steward praises the good wine kept until last. It ends by calling this His first sign, which showed His glory and led His disciples to believe.

1 “This was the first sign Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tatian,** *Diatessaron* 5 (c. 150–180 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 1, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 2 OF 8

The Creator Himself gave the better wine

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus says the wine made from water was even better than ordinary wine. He argues that by using water rather than making wine from nothing, Christ showed He is the Son of the same God who made the earth, the waters and the vine.

2 “But the wine that the Word made from water, instantly and just for the use of those invited to the wedding, was better.”

later in the same passage

“This demonstrated that the God who made the earth and commanded it to bring forth fruit, who established the waters and brought forth the fountains, is the one who in these last times bestowed upon humanity, through His Son, the blessing of food and the favor of drink: the Incomprehensible acting through the comprehensible, and the Invisible through the visible, as there is none beyond Him, and He exists in the bosom of the Father.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 4, page 6 Read it in the library ›

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POINT 3 OF 8

"My hour" meant the Father's set time

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus explains Christ's words to His mother as gently holding back her eagerness. Everything Christ did came at the time the Father had foreknown, and Irenaeus links this hour to the later hour of His suffering.

3

> "This is why, when Mary urged Him to perform the miracle of the wine and wanted to partake of the cup of symbolic significance before its time, the Lord, restraining her premature eagerness, said, "Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour has not yet come"—waiting for that hour foreknown by the Father."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 3, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 4 OF 8

His first sign was worked through water

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Tertullian, writing on baptism, lists the many ways Christ is linked with water. Among them, he notes that Christ first showed His power with water at the wedding feast, which Tertullian sees as honoring the water later used in baptism.

4

> "He first reveals the opening signs of His power in connection with water, when He is invited to the wedding feast"

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Baptism* 9 (c. 196–220 AD)
THF's updated English

Source 9, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 5 OF 8

The miracle was no license for drunkenness

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Alexandria warns that Christ's gift of wine at the wedding did not approve getting drunk. He reads the wine as a symbol of Christ's sacred blood, and urges Christians to drink with care and self-control.

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5 “For when He made water into wine at the wedding, He was not giving permission for people to get drunk.”

later in the same passage

“So, Scripture has called wine a symbol of the sacred blood.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 2.2 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 6, page 6** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 8

Cana points to wine in the Lord's cup

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian uses Cana to argue that the Lord's cup must hold wine, not water alone. Since Christ turned water into wine, he says, it would be backward for the church to offer only water. He reads the wine as Christ's blood and the water as His people.

6 “But how twisted and contrary it is that, although the Lord at the wedding made wine from water, we should make water from wine, when even the sacrament itself should warn and teach us to offer wine in the Lord’s sacrifices.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 13, page 6** Read it in the library ›

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7 “For because Christ bore all of us, since He also bore our sins, we see that the water means the people, and the wine shows the blood of Christ.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 15, page 7** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 8

A picture of Christ's marriage to the Church

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Cyprian also sees the wedding as a figure of Christ and His Church. Because water stands for peoples in Revelation, he reads the water made wine as the nations gathering to Christ in faith.

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8 “That is, He showed that at the marriage of Christ and the Church, when the Jews failed, the people of the nations would instead flow together and assemble.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Epistles* (c. 248–258 AD)
THF's updated English
Source 13, page 6 Read it in the library ›

POINT 8 OF 8

The six jars carry a deeper meaning

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Origen uses the six stone jars as an example of how Scripture has deeper senses beyond the plain story. He compares believers to the jars, purified by the word of Scripture, while still valuing the plain historical sense for ordinary believers.

9 “And I think this is indicated in the Gospels, where there are said to be placed, according to the manner of purification among the Jews, six water-vessels, containing two or three firkins each.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Origen,** *De Principiis (On First Principles)* 4.1 (c. 215–254 AD)
THF's updated English
Source 12, page 6 Read it in the library ›

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not say who was being married or why Jesus' mother was involved in the feast.
- The early writers give several symbolic readings side by side; the passages do not rank one as the only meaning.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 18 early Christian passages and 90 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–18, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 19–92, in Bible order), then 16 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are

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in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *18 passages from 9 writers*

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · sources 1–2*

1 *Diatessaron* 5 **Quote 1, page 2** "yet come?" His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he says to you." There were six stone water jars there, set in place for the Jews' purification. Each could… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Diatessaron* 6 (1885 English; on point 1) "John 4:46 And he entered again into Cana, where he had made the water wine… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 3–5*

3 *Against Heresies: Book III* (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 3** "was the reason why, when Mary was urging [Him] on to [perform] the wonderful miracle of the wine, and was desirous before the time to partake of the cup of… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Against Heresies: Book III* **Quote 2, page 2** "wine, which God produced in a vineyard and was initially consumed, was good. None of those who drank it found any fault with it, and the Lord also drank it… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Against Heresies: Book II* (1885 English) "of all, after He had made the water wine at Cana of Galilee, He went up to the festival day of the passover, on which occasion it is written, "For… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 6–7*

6 *Instructor* 2.2 **Quote 5, page 4** "ἀσωτία), he means that drunkenness does not fit with salvation (τὸ ἄσωστον). For when He made water into wine at the wedding, He was not giving permission for people to… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Instructor* 2.2 (on point 5) when it is drunk in moderate amount." Sirach 31:27 And it is best to mix the wine with as much water as possible. A person should not turn to… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 8–9*

8 *De Anima (On the Soul)* 17 (on point 1) "17:3-8. True and real was the draught of that wine at the… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *On Baptism* 9 **Quote 4, page 3** "discipline, the figures, the preparations, and the prayers, which have appointed the holiness of water! First, when the people, set free without condition, escaped the violence of the Egyptian king… [continues online] **read ›**

Hippolytus, *c. 200–236 AD · source 10*

10 *Against the Heresy of Noetus* 1 (on point 1) "is Jesus of Nazareth, who was invited to the marriage feast in Cana and turned the water into… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 11–12*

11 *Commentary on John* 6 (1885 English) "on that day, after the fourth, which is the sixth from the beginning of those we have enumerated, the marriage takes place in Cana of Galilee, which we shall have… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *De Principiis (On First Principles)* 4.1 (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 5** "which, as I have said, the language of the Gospel seems to indicate, with respect to those who are secretly called by the apostle Jews, that they are purified by… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 13–16*

13 *Epistles* **Quotes 6, 8, pages 4, 5** "is, He showed that at the marriage of Christ and the Church… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Epistles* (on point 6) no need for many arguments, dearest brother, to prove that baptism is always meant by the name of water, and that this is how we should understand it. For when… [continues online] **read ›**

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15 *Epistles* **Quote 7, page 4** because Christ bore all of us, since He also bore our sins, we see that the water means the people, and the wine shows the blood of Christ. But when… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *Epistles* (on point 6) where this practice came from: that, against gospel and apostolic discipline, in some places water is offered alone in the Lord's cup. By itself, water cannot represent the blood… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · source 17*

17 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 5) Son. We say this not because they must not drink at all, for that would insult what God has made for cheerfulness, but that they must not be thrown into… [continues online] **read ›**

Anonymous · *source 18*

18 *Treatise on Re-Baptism* 1 (1885 English; on point 1) "by converting water into wine, He enlarged the nuptial festivity with marvellous joyfulness… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *74 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

19 **Genesis 21:19** Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of living water. She went and filled the skin with water and gave the child a drink. **read ›**

20 **Genesis 24:14** It shall be that the virgin to whom I say, 'Tip your water jar so that I may drink,' and who says to me, 'Drink, and I will water your camels too, until they have finished drinking'—she is the one you have prepared for your servant Isaac. And by this I shall know that you have shown mercy to my master Abraham." **read ›**

21 **Genesis 24:16** The virgin was very beautiful to look at. She was a virgin; no man had known her. She went down to the spring, filled her water jar, and came up. **read ›**

22 **Genesis 24:18** She said, "Drink, sir." She quickly let her water jar down onto her arm and gave him a drink, until he had finished drinking. **read ›**

23 **Genesis 24:20** She quickly emptied her water jar into the trough, ran to the well again to draw, and drew water for all the camels. **read ›**

24 **Genesis 24:44** and who says to me, "Drink, and I will draw water for your camels too"—she is the woman whom the Lord has prepared for his own attendant Isaac. And by this I shall know that you have shown mercy to my master Abraham.' **read ›**

25 **Genesis 26:30** So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. **read ›**

26 **Genesis 29:22** So Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a wedding feast. **read ›**

27 **Genesis 40:10** On the vine were three stems, and it was budding and had put out shoots; the clusters of grapes were ripe. **read ›**

28 **Genesis 43:25** They prepared the gifts until Joseph came at noon, for they had heard that he was going to dine there. **read ›**

29 **Exodus 2:16** Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, who tended the sheep of their father Jethro. They came and drew water until they had filled the troughs, to water the sheep of their father Jethro. **read ›**

30 **Numbers 15:10** And he shall offer wine for a drink offering, half a hin, as a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma to the Lord. **read ›**

31 **Numbers 20:11** Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and much water came out, and the congregation and their cattle drank. **read ›**

32 **Numbers 21:16** And from there, the well. This is the well of which the Lord said to Moses, "Gather the people, and I will give them water to drink." **read ›**

33 **Judges 19:6** So the two of them sat down and ate and drank together. And the young woman's father said to the man, "Come now, stay the night, and your heart will be glad." **read ›**

34 **Judges 19:19** We have both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and bread and wine for me and for the maidservant and for the young man with your servants. There is no lack of anything." **read ›**

35 **Ruth 3:17** And she said to her, "He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said to me, 'Do not go in empty to your mother-in-law.'" **read ›**

36 **2 Samuel 17:28** brought ten beds with double coverings, ten cauldrons, clay pots, wheat, barley, flour, barley meal, beans, and lentils, **read ›**

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37 **2 Kings 3:20** And in the morning, as the sacrifice was going up, behold, water came from the way of Edom, and the land was filled with water. **read ›**

38 **2 Kings 4:3** And he said to her, “Go, ask for vessels for yourself outside, from all your neighbors, empty vessels; do not get only a few. **read ›**

39 **2 Chronicles 4:6** He made ten washbasins, and he set five on the right and five on the left, to wash in them the works of the whole burnt offerings and to rinse in them; and the sea was for the priests to wash in. **read ›**

40 **2 Chronicles 4:8** He made ten tables and set them in the temple, five on the right and five on the left; and he made a hundred golden bowls. **read ›**

41 **Ezra 3:10** And they laid the foundation for building the house of the Lord; and the priests stood in their robes with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord by the direction of David king of Israel. **read ›**

42 **Ezra 4:16** We therefore make known to the king that if that city is built and its walls completed, you will have no peace.” **read ›**

43 **Psalms 7:11** God is a righteous judge, and strong, and patient, not bringing on anger every day. (Septuagint Psalm 7:12 (Psalm 7:11 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

44 **Psalms 9:6** The swords of the enemy have failed utterly, and you have torn down cities; their memorial has perished with a crash, (Septuagint Psalm 9:7 (Psalm 9:6 in most Bibles)) **read ›**

45 **Proverbs 5:23** Such a man dies with the untaught; he is cast out from the abundance of his own livelihood, and he has perished through foolishness. **read ›**

46 **Proverbs 14:19** The evil will fall before the good, and the ungodly will wait at the doors of the righteous. **read ›**

47 **Proverbs 16:9** All the works of the Lord are with righteousness, and the ungodly man is kept for the evil day. **read ›**

48 **Song of Solomon 1:13** My kinsman is to me a bundle of stacte; he shall lie all night between my breasts. **read ›**

49 **Ezekiel 1:13** And in the midst of the living creatures was an appearance like burning coals of fire, like the sight of torches turning about among the living creatures; and the brightness of the fire, and out of the fire went forth lightning. **read ›**

50 **Daniel 9:5** we have done wrong, we have acted lawlessly, and we have departed and turned aside from your commandments and from your judgments, **read ›**

51 **Joel 2:4** Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and they will pursue like horsemen. **read ›**

52 **Micah 6:6** With what shall I lay hold of the Lord and grasp my God Most High? Shall I lay hold of him with whole burnt offerings, with calves a year old? **read ›**

53 **Habakkuk 2:16** You also, drink your fill of dishonor instead of glory; be shaken, O heart, and quake; the cup of the right hand of the Lord has come round upon you, and dishonor has gathered upon your glory. **read ›**

54 **1 Esdras 3:10** The first wrote, “Wine is strongest.” **read ›**

55 **1 Esdras 3:17** And they said to them, “Tell us about what is written.” Then the first, who had spoken of the strength of wine, began, **read ›**

56 **1 Esdras 3:24** O men, is not wine strongest, since it compels men to do these things?” And when he had said this, he was silent. **read ›**

57 **1 Esdras 4:16** and from them they came; and they brought up those who planted the vineyards from which wine comes. **read ›**

58 **1 Esdras 8:57** and twenty golden vessels, and twelve vessels of bronze, of fine bronze, gleaming like gold. **read ›**

59 **Tobit 7:11** I have given my child to seven men, and whenever they went in to her, they died in the night. But for the present, be merry.” And Tobias said, “I will taste nothing here until you make and keep an agreement with me.” **read ›**

60 **Tobit 8:19** And he held a wedding feast for them for fourteen days. **read ›**

61 **Tobit 9:6** And they rose early together and came to the wedding; and Tobias blessed his wife. **read ›**

62 **Tobit 11:19** and Tobias’s wedding was celebrated with gladness for seven days. **read ›**

63 **Wisdom of Sirach 34:27** Wine is like life to a man, if you drink it in due measure. What life has a man who lacks wine? It was created for gladness to men. **read ›**

64 **Wisdom of Sirach 34:28** Rejoicing of heart and gladness of soul is wine drunk in season and in moderation; **read ›**

65 **Wisdom of Sirach 35:5** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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66 **Wisdom of Sirach 35:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

67 **Wisdom of Sirach 38:5** Was not water made sweet by wood, that its power might be known? **read ›**

68 **Wisdom of Sirach 50:15** he stretched out his hand to the cup and poured a drink offering of the blood of the grape; he poured it out at the foundations of the altar, a pleasing aroma to the Most High, the King of all. **read ›**

69 **1 Maccabees 5:23** Then he took those in Galilee and in Arbatta, with their wives and children and all that they had, and brought them into Judea with great gladness. **read ›**

70 **1 Maccabees 9:39** They lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold, there was a noise and much baggage; and the bridegroom came out with his friends and his brothers to meet them with tambourines and musicians and many weapons. **read ›**

71 **1 Maccabees 14:19** And these were read before the assembly in Jerusalem. **read ›**

72 **1 Maccabees 16:9** At that time Judas, John's brother, was wounded; but John pursued them until he came to Kedron, which Cendebeus had built. **read ›**

73 **2 Maccabees 15:39** For just as it is harmful to drink wine by itself, and again likewise water, while wine mixed with water is sweet and produces a delightful charm, so also the skillful arrangement of the account delights the ears of those who read the work. And here shall be the end. **read ›**

74 **3 Maccabees 1:13** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

75 **3 Maccabees 6:31** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

76 **Mark 2:16** The scribes and the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why is it that he eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" **read ›**

77 **John 2:1** On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and Jesus' mother was there. **read ›**

78 **John 2:2** Jesus also was invited, with his disciples, to the wedding. **read ›**

79 **John 2:3** When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine." **read ›**

80 **John 2:6** Now six stone water pots were set there for the Jews' purification, each holding two or three metretes. **read ›**

81 **John 2:7** Jesus said to them, "Fill the water pots with water." So they filled them up to the brim. **read ›**

82 **John 2:8** He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the ruler of the feast." So they took it. **read ›**

83 **John 2:9** When the ruler of the feast tasted the water that had become wine, he did not know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. The ruler of the feast called the bridegroom **read ›**

84 **John 2:10** and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the guests have drunk freely, then that which is worse. You have kept the good wine until now!" **read ›**

85 **John 2:11** Jesus performed this first of his signs in Cana of Galilee. He manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him. **read ›**

86 **John 4:46** So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee, where he had made the water wine. There was a royal official whose son was sick in Capernaum. **read ›**

87 **John 4:54** This again was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea into Galilee. **read ›**

88 **Acts 12:3** When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This was during the days of unleavened bread. **read ›**

89 **Acts 24:7** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

90 **Acts 24:11** seeing that you can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem. **read ›**

91 **Acts 25:6** When he had stayed among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he sat on the judgment seat, and commanded Paul to be brought. **read ›**

92 **Romans 13:12** The night is far gone, and the day is near. Let us therefore throw off the deeds of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *16 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Exodus 15:25

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Matthew 3:13 · 10:42 · 14:25 · 27:24
Mark 4:36
Luke 1:41 · 3:14 · 22:44
John 1:29 · 4:6 · 7:37 · 13:1 · 19:34 · 20:27
Ephesians 5:18

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “What did the early church teach about the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11)?” on September 15, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

Library only. This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY