

Introduction

In 2011, Richard Heck won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. He received the award for developing a method that makes carbon atoms react more easily with one another. Because carbon is a foundational element, his method has enhanced the ability to make new medicines and revolutionary materials, like plastic, as well. What Heck did was impressive, but it's child's play compared to what Jesus did in our text, John 2:1-11. Let's examine what He did there and what it teaches us about Him.

The Master of Molecules

Our text is the first recorded miracle that Jesus performed. Some years ago, Johnny Carson had an eight year-old boy as a guest on his *Tonight Show*. He had rescued two friends from a coal mine and was on the show to tell his story. As Johnny interviewed him, it became apparent he was a Christian, prompting him to ask the boy if he went to Sunday school. When he said he did, Johnny queried him about what he was learning. **"Last week, it was the story of Jesus turning the water into wine,"** he answered. The audience roared of course, given Johnny's reputation, but he, trying to keep a straight face, asked, **"What did you learn from that story?"** To which the boy innocently replied, **"If you're going to have a wedding, make sure you invite Jesus."**

That's what happened here in our text. A newly married couple and their families threw a wedding feast. It, like most did, probably involved the entire community and lasted seven days. It wasn't surprising, therefore, that the wine ran out, a major social embarrassment for the couple and their families. So, Mary asked her son Jesus to address the problem, which He did. The long and short of it was that He turned six 20 to 30 gallon pots filled with water into wine, enough for all.

But let's get specific and consider what Jesus did here in terms of chemistry – in terms of atoms and molecules. Wine is a complex solution

the chemical formula of which varies from one wine to another. But all do share a common substance, ethanol, the chemical formula of which is $\text{CH}_3\text{CH}_2\text{OH}$. It's composed of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen atoms, combined together in a specific form. The chemical formula for water of course is H_2O . That helps us determine what Jesus did. By simply willing it, He added carbon and hydrogen atoms to the H_2O molecules in the pots and formed them into $\text{CH}_3\text{CH}_2\text{OH}$ molecules. He changed one molecular structure, in other words, into another.

That is phenomenal. Remember the conclusion the boy drew from this narrative. If you're going to have a wedding, invite Jesus. But I'd draw another and it's stirring. Jesus was the Master of molecules.

The Master of Reality

But He was more than that. He was the Master of all reality as well.

Think about physics for a moment and Albert Einstein's celebrated equation $e=mc^2$. Human beings have the "**m**" side available to them. They can use matter like gas, oil, or wood to produce energy. But Jesus, unlike human beings, had the "**e**" side available to Him. He could use energy, God's, to create matter. That's exactly what He did when He fed 5000 people with five loaves and two fish and 4000 people with seven loaves and a few small fish. We say He multiplied the food, but that isn't accurate. He didn't multiply it. He created it "**out of nothing**" just as He did the universe in Genesis 1:1. He created matter, bread and fish, using God's energy.

But Jesus wasn't just able to change molecular structures and create matter from nothing. He was able to transform the tissues of the human body from sickness to health or even death to life, to suspend gravity and walk on water, to control weather patterns, and to eliminate unfruitful trees without a saw or ax. There's no doubt about it. He was the Master of material reality.

It wasn't just material reality though. It was spiritual reality, meaning non-material reality, as well. He was able to conquer evils like

demons that inhabited and possessed people. He was able to forgive people's sins, like the paralytic's. He was able to bring out the best in people, like Peter, by nurturing their strengths and refining their weaknesses. He was able to preach and teach in ways that touched people profoundly, and more.

Yes, Jesus was the Master of all reality and I'd sum it up this way. As we learned last week, He had a cognitive mastery of all reality. He was the smartest person who ever lived, utterly smart. As we've learned today, He had a practical mastery of it as well. He was the most competent person who ever lived, utterly competent.

Jesus Shares His Competence

Jesus was competent and as He Himself revealed in another text we read, John 14:11-12, we can be too. In verse 11, He asserted His unity with Father God and the empirical evidence that proved it – the works He did. He then declared to His disciples in verse 12, **“He who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.”**

This is one of the most startling statements Jesus ever made. He spoke of going to the Father, which referred to His ascension. His ascension work, which continues until His Second Coming, includes interceding for His followers before Father God and empowering them. This promise of His in verse 12 is an aspect of that empowering.

When I practiced law, I drafted several powers of attorney for clients of mine. A power of attorney is a legal relationship involving a principal and an agent. In it, the principal gives the agent whatever powers of his He wishes to give. That power might be to sign his checks, to direct his investments, to sell his property, to settle his lawsuits, to make his business decisions, and so on.

That helps explain verse 12. Jesus gives something like a power of attorney. He is the principal and His followers are His agents. And as the principal, He gives them the same powers over reality that He had.

He doesn't give all the powers He had to each individual agent or follower, but He does give them all to His followers collectively. They are, as a result, able to do greater works, in terms of scope and influence, than He did. His works were confined to three years in a restricted locale, the land of Israel. But theirs extend through all the centuries until His Second Coming, and cover the whole world. I'd summarize what Jesus promises to do in verse 12 this way. It's to share His competence, His mastery over reality, with His followers.

That shared competence manifests itself in two ways. One is in actions on their part that are beyond the natural. They say and do things that are beyond their normal abilities to say and do. The other is in the effects of their actions that are beyond the natural. The results of what they say and do are beyond what would normally occur.

Jesus' friend Frank Laubach explained the dynamics of this well via his own experience: **"I feel simply carried along each hour, doing my part in a plan which is far beyond myself. This sense of cooperation with God in little things is what astonished me. I need something, and turn around to find it waiting for me. I must work, to be sure, but there is God working along with me."**

That is precisely how Jesus shares His competence with us. We routinely move through our days in a power that is beyond us. He is right there working along with us. We say and do things as a result that are beyond our own natural abilities. Or the effects of the things we say and do are beyond what would naturally occur.

Examples abound. My mother was one of several whose prayers healed a woman of cancer who was just hours from death. Or a Christian gave me \$75 when I was in law school because **"The Lord told me to,"** which was exactly the amount I needed to pay a bill. Or a Christian professional football player spoke a prophetic word to a pastor about a church he'd eventually start, which he did start. Or Bud Robinson, who had no formal education and who stuttered so badly he could hardly say his name, won over 100,000 people to Jesus through his preaching.

Believe in Jesus

Jesus shared His competence with them. And He'll do the same with us – if we believe in Him. That's the condition He identified in John 14:12. He will empower us *if* we believe in Him. The belief to which He referred there has two components or parts.

One is a mental component. Belief is an interior act of the mind that assumes that something is so. In this case, that something is what I've preached about the last three weeks. Jesus was utterly good, smart, and competent.

Sadly, there aren't very many people today who believe that about Him. Listen to the words of Dallas Willard in that regard: **“Very few people today find Jesus interesting as a person or of vital relevance to the course of their actual lives. He is not generally regarded as a real-life personality who deals with real-life issues but is thought to be concerned with some feathery realm other than the one we must *deal* with, and must deal with *now*. And frankly, he is not taken to be a person of much ability.”**

That has to change if we're going to share in His competence. We must assume He's the greatest and best and that His person, words, and life matter more, in practical terms, than anyone and anything else do.

The belief that Jesus' promise in John 14:12 requires of us has a second component. The first is a mental component. The second is a directional component. Our belief is a distinctive life force in us that directs all aspects of our existence, especially how we think and act.

It directs how we think in two ways.

One is that it determines the thoughts upon which we dwell. We think about the things that matter the most to us. If we truly believe Jesus is the greatest and best, He will matter the most to us. So, when our minds aren't necessarily occupied, we'll think about Him more than we do anyone or anything else. I think about Him, for instance, more than I do my wife.

Our belief directs how we think in a second way. It determines how

we perceive and interpret the activities, experiences, and events of our lives. If we truly believe Jesus is the greatest and best, we'll perceive and interpret them primarily in terms of Him. We'll view them primarily as they relate to Him – to His promises, purposes, and concerns. So, I'm slandered and immediately think of His promise in Romans 8:31. If He is for me, who can be against me? Or I get a job and immediately think of His concern in Colossians 3:23 that I do it **"heartily."**

But our belief that Jesus is the greatest and the best doesn't just direct how we think. It directs how we act as well. We take Him primarily into account in everything we do. We routinely behave in our everyday lives as if He is utterly good, smart, and competent.

Last week, for instance, I mentioned a Christian getting sued. If Jesus is the greatest and best, it's safe to do what He says when I'm sued. I'll be benefitted if I do. So, I defend the lawsuit with love and concern for the plaintiff. If He isn't the greatest and best, it's unsafe to do what He says. I'll be prejudiced if I do. So, I defend the lawsuit adversarially, with anger and malice toward the plaintiff. If I believe Jesus is the greatest and best, I'll do what He says. If I believe He isn't, I won't. My belief about Him will direct how I defend the lawsuit.

That then is the condition for Jesus sharing His competence with us. We must believe in Him. Assuming with confidence that He's the greatest and best, we think and act primarily in terms of Him.

Conclusion

I mentioned the Nobel Prize earlier. Nobel Prizes are international awards for outstanding achievement in the fields of physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, Literature, Peace, and Economics. Human beings are so impressed with accomplishments in those fields that the Nobel Prize winners receive a gold medal, a diploma, and over \$1 million in cash. But I wonder. How impressed is Jesus? The answer is **"Not very"** and you now know why. It's because He was, during His earthly life, the master of all reality. He was, and still is, utterly competent.

Question #3

What did Jesus do specifically to the water so that it became wine in John 2:1-11 and what does that teach us about Him?

Wine is a complex solution, the chemical formula of which varies from one wine to another. But all do share a common substance, ethanol, the chemical formula of which is $\text{CH}_3\text{CH}_2\text{OH}$. It's composed of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen atoms, combined together in a specific form. The chemical formula for water of course is H_2O .

For water to be changed into wine, water molecules must be changed into ethanol molecules. That helps us determine what Jesus did. By simply willing it, He added carbon and hydrogen atoms to the H_2O molecules in the pots and formed them into $\text{CH}_3\text{CH}_2\text{OH}$ molecules. The long and short of it is that He changed one molecular structure into another, which makes Him the Master of molecules.

The Old Testament reveals that the triune God, Yahweh, had the ability to act on matter at the subatomic, atomic, and molecular levels. By willing it, He could add atoms to or to take away atoms from molecules and form them so that one thing changed into another. Thus, He added atoms to and took atoms away from Moses' wooden rod so that it became a snake. Or He changed the bonding of the molecules that made up the clothing of the Israelites so that it didn't wear out. Yahweh is the Master of molecules.

And so was Jesus, during His earthly life. The first temptation of Satan in Matthew 4:3-4 implies just that. Satan challenged Him to prove that He was the Son of God by turning stones into bread. Satan would not of course tempt us to do that because we can't. In reality, it would be no temptation at all. But it was to Jesus because Satan and He both knew that He could do it. He possessed the ability to change the molecular structure of the stones into the molecular structure of bread. He was literally the Master of molecules.

But He was more than that. He was the Master of all reality as well. He had not only a cognitive mastery of reality, but a practical mastery of it as well. He could create matter from nothing, transform injured or diseased tissue into healthy tissue, suspend gravity, control weather patterns, forgive sins, touch people profoundly with words, and more. He was, simply put, the most competent person who ever lived. He was, in fact, and still is, utterly competent.

We are always safe, therefore, when we do what He says. It's rarely understood that obedience to Jesus is rooted in the firm belief that He's utterly competent. He says that we should forgive those who wrong us. If He's utterly competent, it's safe (beneficial) to do so. He says that we should rejoice when others outshine us. If He's utterly competent, it's safe to do so. He says that we should overcome evil with good. If He's utterly competent, it's safe to do so. Obedience and disobedience are often matters of belief. If we believe Jesus is utterly competent, we'll do what He says or at least try. If we believe He isn't, we won't. The

sequence then is this. Understand Jesus is utterly competent, which leads to belief that He is utterly competent, which leads to obeying Him.