

Kiama Anglican Church
Christ Church Kiama with St. Paul's Minnamurra

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

JOHN

*... That By Believing You May Have Life in
His Name*

**LEADER,
SNOTES**

Studies in John 1:1-4:42

Bible Studies: Term 1: 2012.

JOHN: *That by believing you may have life in his name.*

Near the end of his book John, the disciple and apostle of Jesus tells us what he has written and why:

John 20:30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 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.

Merrill C. Tenny writes that “*this conclusion ties together the three persistent themes of the Gospel: the “signs” that demonstrate Christ’s nature and power; the response of “belief” that is exemplified in the crises and growth in the lives of the disciples; and the new “life” that is found in the relationship with Christ.* (Expositor’s Bible Commentary).

And it is this book that we begin to study in this 9 part series. This is a marvellous piece of literature, a different type of ‘story’ to the other Gospels and is packed with deep and well thought through theological meaning.

Writing after the other Gospel writers (possibly in the 90s AD) John has had time to reflect and ponder and watch the impact of the gospel on those around him. Paul Barnett writes: “*The challenge is clear. We must hear John’s book prayerfully, humbly and with a pure heart, otherwise we will not see God. Human intelligence, erudition or achievement alone will not open our eyes.*”

We must pray that God will open our eyes to see the wondrous things in these first chapters of John’s Gospel and having understood we must see how this helps those who don’t know Jesus to understand in him and so have ‘life in His name.’

Greg Holmes - January 2012

THE STUDIES

Study Date* Passage Belief that: Booklet Page No

1	Sun 29 Jan	JOHN 1:1-18 Jesus the Word	Jesus is God made man.	5
2	Sun 5 Feb	JOHN 1:19-34 John the Baptist	Jesus is the promised 'Lamb'	7
3	Sun 12 Feb	JOHN 1:35-51 The First Disciples	Jesus calls people to follow him.	9
4	Sun 19 Feb	JOHN 2:1-11 The Wedding at Cana	Jesus rules creation and gives good gifts to his people	11
5	Sun 26 Feb	JOHN 2:12-25 Cleansing the Temple	Jesus stands for truth and right worship	13
6	Sun 4 Mar	JOHN 3:1-21 Jesus and Nicodemus	Jesus brings new birth	15
7	Sun 11 Mar	JOHN 3:22-36 John the Baptist and Jesus	Jesus is the 'greater one' who brings eternal life.	17
8	Sun 18 Mar	JOHN 4:1-26 The Samaritan Woman	Jesus brings 'living water'	19
9	Sun 25 Mar	JOHN 4:27-42 The Disciples and the Samaritans	Jesus brings the harvest.	21

**This is the Sunday the passage is first preached on (at 8:00 and 10:00). It is preached on the following Sunday at St. Pauls and Sunday@6.*

References:

- Barnett, P. John: The Shepherd King (Reading the Bible Today Series) (Sydney South, Aquila, 2005)
- Burge, G.M. The NIV Application Commentary : John (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000).
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- Guthrie, D. "John" in Carson, D.A.; France, R.T.; Motyer, J.A.; Wenham, G.J. (Eds) New Bible Commentary (21st Century Edition) (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).
- Kruse, C.F. John (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) (IVP, Leicester, 1985).
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- Wright, T. John for Everyone Part 1, Chapters 1-10 (London, SPCK, 2004).

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THE SECTIONS OF THE STUDIES

Read the Bible

It is good to read the passage for the week at the start of each study. Each of the passages in John are relatively short so reading them aloud is worthwhile.

Discuss

The following three sections are the study proper. They are for the group meeting. As the leader you need to make some choices about which ones to do and how much time to spend on each.

Explore the Basics

These look at the basic ideas in the passage. I would recommend that each week you do these.

Deeper and Wider

As the heading suggests these dig deeper into the themes of the passage or look more widely at Scripture. It is probably among these that you as leader need to make some choices. Of course if you decide to have a go at them all I am sure it will be worthwhile.

Apply

These Questions should be done each week or at least you should work hard in your group each week to APPLY the lessons learnt to daily, everyday, hard slog, living in our world.

John's (and Jesus') world was very different to ours and their social, political and religions structures quite different. In these studies we need to understand the original meaning then dig into that to see the crossover points and then apply this 1st Century AD material to our 21st Century AD world through the lens of our salvation through Jesus Christ.

There is a DVD "JOHN" in the Visual Bible Series which uses the actual words of the Good News Bible – it is excellent and worth viewing with this series. I have one copy I am willing to lend and we will try to get hold of more.

We need to make the rubber of the 'idea' hit the road of our lives, thoughts and actions. - One of the problems in writing 'application' type questions is not knowing where all the individuals in groups etc. are up to. If you, as the group leader, can see a better application of the material - DO IT. - The important thing is to relevantly apply what we are talking about to our lives.

For next week: This is the passage for next week.

Please note that my answers below are not the 'correct' answers or what you are trying to get to in the study. I have set them out as a guide to my thinking only and an assistance to you.

These Leaders Notes are meant to be the start of the assistance I am willing to give in regard to the studies. If you need anything further DO NOT hesitate to contact me.

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

From Fee, G.D & Stuart, D; How to Read the Bible Book by Book (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2002).

ORIENTING DATA FOR JOHN

Content: the story of Jesus, Messiah and Son of God, told from the perspective of postresurrection insights; in his incarnation Jesus made God known and made his life available to all through the cross

Author: the beloved disciple who “wrote [these things] down” (21:24; cf. 13:23; 19:25–27; 20:2; 21:7) most likely refers to John the apostle, son of Zebedee (otherwise not named in this Gospel).

Date: unknown; probably ca. A.D. 90–95

Recipients: see 1 John, to which this Gospel is closely related

Emphases: Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; in his incarnation and the crucifixion, he both revealed God’s love and redeemed humanity; discipleship means to “remain in the vine” (Jesus) and to bear fruit (to love as he loved); the Holy Spirit will be given to his people to continue his work

OVERVIEW OF JOHN

John’s Gospel is one of the great treasures of the Christian faith. Intentionally telling the story from a perspective after Jesus’ resurrection and the gift of the Spirit (see 2:22; 12:16; 14:26; 16:13–14), John writes to reassure believers of the truth of what they believe (in light of defections and rejection)—that through the Incarnation God is fully and finally known. Here is God’s love in full and open display.

In so doing, John puts the story of Jesus into the broadest biblical framework: The Incarnate One is none other than the Word, present with God from the beginning and responsible for creation (1:1–4, 10). But the Incarnate One is also the Crucified One, who, as God’s Lamb, “takes away the sin of the world” (1:29). John is also concerned to demonstrate that the incarnate Son of God is in fact the long-awaited Jewish Messiah; thus Jesus bursts onto the world’s stage, fulfilling every imaginable Jewish hope, while at the same time becoming “the Savior of the world” (4:42). Since he is the Son of (the living) God, what he gives is *life* (= the life of God himself)—eternal life (= the life of the coming age available now).

John begins with a prologue that puts much of this in poetic form (1:1–18), weaving theology and history together as he sets the stage for his telling of the story. The story itself is in two major parts (1:19–12:50; 13:1–20:31); it concludes with a commissioning epilogue and explanation of the (not-expected) death of the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (21:1–25).

In part 1 Jesus first manifests himself as Son of God to his disciples (1:19–2:11), who thus see “his glory” (1:14) and “put their faith in him” (2:11). He is then revealed to “the world” (2:13–12:50) as both the Messiah and the Son of God. John brings this off by telling the story in the setting of the Jewish feasts, where Jesus acts and speaks in ways that fulfill the rich messianic expectations expressed (especially) through the ceremonies connected with these feasts (Passover, 2:13–4:54; Sabbath, 5:1–47; Passover, 6:1–71; Tabernacles, 7:1–10:21; Dedication, 10:22–42; [prelude to the final] Passover, 11:1–12:36). Also in this section one finds the seven “signs” (John’s *significant* word for miracles) and the seven “I am” sayings (Jesus’ self-identification). Part 1 ends with a double conclusion, narrating first Jesus’ rejection by some of the Jews (12:37–43) and then the meaning of Jesus and his mission (12:44–50).

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The two narratives connected with the Passover (2:13–4:54; 6:1–71) also anticipate the final Passover narrated in part 2. Here the interest focuses first on the disciples as those who will carry on Jesus' mission (chs. 13–17) and then on the crucifixion itself (chs. 18–19), where the Son of God cries (triumphantly) about his work, "It is finished" (19:30). The narrative proper concludes with the resurrection (ch. 20), focusing especially on the commissioning of the disciples (20:19–23) and using Thomas's need to see as a foil for those who believe without seeing (vv. 24–31).

SPECIFIC ADVICE FOR READING JOHN

The thing that should most strike you when coming to John's Gospel from having read the Synoptics is how different it is. Not only is the basic scene of Jesus' ministry different (Jerusalem instead of Galilee), but the whole ministry looks quite different. Here you find no messianic secret (Jesus is openly confessed as Messiah from the start); no parables (but rich use of symbolic language); no driving out of demons; no narratives of the testing in the desert, the Transfiguration, or the Lord's Supper. Rather than placing emphasis on the kingdom of God, the emphasis is on Jesus himself (the Life who gives eternal life); rather than short, pithy, memorable sayings, the teaching comes most often in long discourses. As one scholar put it, "John seems to belong to a different world."

The reason is that John deliberately sets out to tell Jesus' story from the perspective of what he had come to know about him after the light had dawned (brought about by Jesus' resurrection and the gift of the Spirit).

If the Synoptic Gospels care about Jesus' place in the history of Israel and beyond, John cares about Jesus' place in the whole scheme of things—from creation to redemption and beyond (final resurrection). That the Messiah is none other than the eternal Son of God is the ultimate good news of the Christian story.

Study 1: JOHN 1:1-18

Belief that: Jesus is God become Man

Day	Reading	My Thoughts	Prayer Points
1	JOHN 1:1-9		
2	JOHN 1:10-13		
3	JOHN 1:14-18		
4	Genesis 1		
5	John Chapters 1-4		

The first three (or two) of these readings break the passage into bite size chunks and the next one (or two) look at related passages.

The 5th reading takes you through John's Gospel in the 9 weeks.

The idea is to read through these readings in the week before your Bible Study Group meets.

Study 1: JOHN 1:1-18

Belief that: Jesus is God become Man

Before we Start

- 1. Read John 20:31. What does John say he is trying to do in this ‘story’ of his?**

John 20:30-31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 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 states quite explicitly what he has intended by his book. He wants people to have ‘life’ in the name of Jesus and he sees that as coming by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

So for us we need to learn more of our belief from this book and to know how belief in Jesus can be communicated to us.

It is interesting that John puts this in immediately after the Thomas resurrection story which concludes with John 20:29 *Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

Wright: *“These opening verses are, in fact, such a complete introduction to the book that by the time you get to the story you know a good deal about what’s coming and what it means.”*

- 1. What do the first few words of John’s Gospel remind you of? (Look also at Mark 1:1)**

Barnett: *“John opens with the outrageous, attention grabbing assertion that the eternal Word that created the universe and the patterns in the universe was a man”*

I believe we are meant immediately to think of the beginning of Genesis (which starts ‘in the beginning’)

Marks Gospel also starts with Mark 1:1 *The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

Wright: *“Whatever else John is going to tell us, he wants us to see his book as the story of God and the world, not just the story of one character in place and time.”*

Carson: *“In the beginning immediately reminds any reader of the Old Testament of the opening verse of the Bible: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’ Genesis begins with creation; John refers to creation (vv. 3-4), but soon turns to what Paul calls ‘new creation’ (Jn. 3; cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). Both in Genesis*

and here, the context shows that the beginning is absolute: the beginning of all things, the beginning of the universe.”

2. What did John the Baptist do? Where did he come from?

John the Baptist (we need to be careful about how we designate our Johns in this first few chapters) v 6 says came from God (The full story is in Luke 1).

He came to ‘bear witness to the light.

Note Carson: *“The Evangelist does not need to identify John as ‘the Baptist’, because he never mentions by name the only other John in Jesus’ circle, John the son of Zebedee, the brother of James and intimate of Peter. The traditional explanation for this silence is still the best one: John the son of Zebedee was responsible for this Gospel, and preferred to refer to himself only obliquely. ... The forerunner’s significance to the story is grounded in the fact that he was sent from God, assigned to this specific task. That he was commissioned by the Almighty places him in the same category as Moses (Ex. 3:10-15) and the prophets (e.g. Is. 6:8; Je. 1:4ff.)—indeed, in this respect, he is like Jesus himself, who was also sent from God.”*

3. v9-13. Who rejects the ‘light’ and who receives it? What are the consequences for both?

Significantly it is ‘his own’ who, in general, do not receive Him.

This is reflected in John’s ongoing story.

Some, they are not defined except as believers, however do receive him and they become ‘children of God’.

A title previously assigned to those called ‘his own’ above.

Carson: *“To people who received him, to those who displayed such faith the Word gave the right (exousia; not ‘power’ as in AV) to become children of God. These people enjoy the privilege of becoming the covenant people of God ... Another way of describing those who receive the Word is suggested by the ‘children of God’ metaphor: they are children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. The Prologue thus introduces us to the ‘new birth’ theme of ch. 3.”*

4. Who or what is the ‘Word’? Consider its relationship to these OT references: Genesis 1:3ff; Psalms 33:6; Jeremiah 1:4; Isaiah 9:8; Ezekiel 33:7; Amos 3:1, 8; Psalm 107:20; Isaiah 55:11).

Of course the simple answer is ‘Jesus’

But these verses give us an Old Testament Background:

Genesis 1:3 *And God said ...* 6 *And God said ...* 9 *And God said, ...*
11 *Then God said, ...* 14 *And God said, ...* 20 *And God said, ...* 24
And God said, ...

26 *Then God said, ...* 29 *Then God said,*

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Psalms 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

Jeremiah 1:4 The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Isaiah 9:8 The Lord has sent a message against Jacob; it will fall on Israel.

Ezekiel 33:7 “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me.

Amos 3:1 Hear this word the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel—against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt:

Amos 3:8 The lion has roared— who will not fear?

The Sovereign LORD has spoken— who can but prophesy?

Psalms 107:20 He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.

Isaiah 55:11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

*Carson: “However the Greek term is understood, there is a more readily available background than that provided by Philo or the Greek philosophical schools. Considering how frequently John quotes or alludes to the Old Testament, that is the place to begin. There, ‘the word’ (Heb. *da b a r*) of God is connected with God’s powerful activity in creation (cf. *Gn. 1:3ff.*; *Ps. 33:6*), revelation (*Je. 1:4*; *Is. 9:8*; *Ezk. 33:7*; *Am. 3:1, 8*) and deliverance (*Ps. 107:20*; *Is. 55:1*). If the Lord is said to speak to the prophet Isaiah (e.g. *Is. 7:3*), elsewhere we read that ‘the word of the Lord came to Isaiah’ (*Is. 38:4*; cf. *Je. 1:4*; *Ezk. 1:6*). It was by ‘the word of the Lord’ that the heavens were made (*Ps. 33:6*): in *Gn. 1:3, 6, 9, etc.* God simply speaks, and his powerful word creates. That same word effects deliverance and judgment (*Is. 55:11*; cf. *Ps. 29:3ff.*). When some of his people faced illness that brought them to the brink of death, God ‘sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave’ (*Ps. 107:20*). ... In short, God’s ‘Word’ in the Old Testament is his powerful self-expression in creation, revelation and salvation, and the personification of that ‘Word’ makes it suitable for John to apply it as a title to God’s ultimate self-disclosure, the person of his own Son..”*

Wright: *“This book (John) is about the creator God acting in a new way within his much loved creation. It is about the way in which the long story, which began in Genesis, reached the climax the creator had always intended. And it will do this through ‘the Word’. In genesis 1 the climax is the creation of human beings, made in God’s image. In John 1, the climax is the arrival of a human being, the Word become ‘flesh’.”*

Barnett: *“The Word who was the divine Creator when incarnate made wine from water; the Word who was life-giver when incarnate gave life to dead Lazarus; the Word who was light when incarnate gave sight to the man born blind. Above all, to those who receive him the Word gives birth into the family and kingdom of God.”*

Deeper and Wider

- 1. Consider the ideas of Light and Darkness in this passage. Discuss whether they relate to the creation or to morality (or both)?**

I believe it refers to both.

Carson *“But any reader who had entered into sustained dialogue with Christians, and, more importantly, any reader who had read through this Gospel once and was now re-reading it, could not fail to see in v. 5 an anticipation of the light/darkness duality that dominates much of the rest of the book. The ‘darkness’ in John is not only absence of light, but positive evil (cf. 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46; 1 Jn. 1:5, 6; 2:8, 9, 11); the light is not only revelation bound up with creation, but with salvation. Apart from the light brought by the Messiah, the incarnate Word, people love darkness because their deeds are evil (3:19), and when the light does put [John, p. 120] in an appearance, they hate it, because they do not want their deeds to be exposed (3:20).”*

Wright: *“The Word challenged the darkness before creation and now challenges the darkness that is found, tragically, within creation itself. The Word is bringing into being the new creation, in which God says once more, ‘Let there be light!’”*

Barnett: *“The light portrays God’s own righteous and holy character. The incarnate Word is the blazing ‘light of the world’ (8:12) that exposes the darkness of evil in the world.”*

- 2. Look at v14. Literally it says Jesus ‘tabernacled’ amongst us (pitched his tent). How does this relate to the story of the Exodus in the OT? (see Exodus 25:8,9; 29:46.)**

Using the term ‘tented’ among us probably conveys the idea well. The theme here is dwelling amongst the people.

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Exodus 25:8 *“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. 9 Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.*

Exodus 29:46 *They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.*

Carson: *“The Word made his dwelling among us. More literally translated, the Greek verb ske noo means that the Word pitched his tabernacle, or lived in his tent, amongst us. For Greek-speaking Jews and other readers of the Greek Old Testament, the term would call to mind the ske ne , the tabernacle where God met with Israel before the temple was built. The tabernacle was erected at God’s command: ‘Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them’ (Ex. 25:8).”*

3. **Read v3-5 and Colossians 1:16-17 and Hebrews 1:2. In what way was Jesus involved in the Creation?**

Colossians 1:16 *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Hebrews 1:2 *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*

The New Testament view is that Jesus is the agent of creation. This of course stresses his pre-eminence and his right to rule over the earth.

Carson: *“That the pre-existent Christ created everything is a common theme in the New Testament, even though the title ‘Word’ in this connection is restricted to the present passage. Referring to Jesus Christ, Paul says that all things were created ‘by him’ and even ‘for him’, and that ‘in him all things hold together’ (Col. 1:16-17). The writer of Hebrews speaks of the Son as the one through whom God made the universe (Heb. 1:2); the Apocalypse presents him as ‘the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the arche (beginning? originator? ruler?) of God’s creation’ (Rev. 3:14).”*

4. **Read Philippians 2:5-11 and Colossians 1:15-20. In what ways are these ‘hymns’ like John 1:1-14.**

Philippians 2:5-11

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the

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very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross
For one thing they focus on Jesus. They stress his deity, yet his earthly life.

They have a highly exalted view of Jesus.

But note Carson: *“The term ‘poem’ can be applied to the Prologue only with hesitation. Many have argued that the Prologue is poetry interrupted by two prose insertions (1:6-8, 15). ...The most that can be concluded is that the frequency of such features in 1:1-18 enables us to speak of ‘rhythmical prose’.”*

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Apply

1. **How can you get to know God better (see v18)?**

For Discussion.

But it is Jesus who makes him known.

And it is in the Gospels that we see Jesus.

And of course John says:

John 20:30-31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 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.

2. **What does it mean for you personally that the Creator God has become ‘flesh’?**

Barnett: “‘Flesh’ indicates humanity, but more than that, vulnerable humanity. It was true humanity marked by genuine exhaustion, hunger, thirst, grief and suffering.”

And of course see John 20:31

For Next Week: Read John 1:19-34

Study 2: JOHN 1:19-34

Belief that: Jesus is the promised ‘Lamb’.

Explore the Basics

We need when we look at the sections about John the Baptist to be careful to make clear which John (John the Baptist or John the Apostle and Gospel writer). Barnett makes this interesting point about the two of them: *“The two ‘Johns’ are like bookends on either side of the Lord, bearing testimony to him in this Gospel”*

Read the passage carefully together.

1. **What have we been told so far about John the Baptist? (see 1:6-8,15)**

John 1:6 *There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.*

John 1:15 *John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”*

Sent from God, called John, a witness testifying to the light, preacher, knows he is to point to Jesus.

2. **How does John answer those who are questioning him? Who are those questioners?**

The questioners are the Jews of Jerusalem’s envoys who are described as priests and Levites sent by the ‘Jews’.

(We need to note - Barnett: *“This is consistent with the rest of the Gospel where ‘the Jews’ refers to their leaders, not the people in general. This Gospel is not anti-Semitic; its criticisms are not of the people but the hierarchy who opposed Jesus throughout and brought about his death.”*)

John’s answers are about who his is not

He is not:

The Christ

The Prophet

Elijah

Though he is probably wrong about not being Elijah.

(Carson notes: *“The Synoptic Gospels report that Jesus identified John the Baptist with the promised Elijah (Mt. 11:14; 17:12; Mk. 9:13; cf. Lk. 1:17), but they never suggest that the Baptist himself made the connection. Here he refuses to make it—a refusal which, when placed beside the Synoptic evidence,*

suggests that he did not detect as much significance in his own ministry as Jesus did.”)

He is ‘the voice of one calling in the wilderness’ (Isaiah 40)

Carson: *“The forceful way this is presented, ‘He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely’, is the Evangelist’s way of saying that even the Baptist’s denials that he was the Christ constituted part of his positive witness to (his confession of) the true Christ.”*

3. What is John the Baptist’s baptism all about? What does it point to?

John’s Baptism is water baptism but it points to a greater baptism in Jesus.

The Synoptic Gospels have more to say about this – see the question below.

Barnett: *“John is baptising for only one reason: to announce the arrival of the long-awaited Lord prophesied by Isaiah (v23).”*

4. List the things said about Jesus in this passage? Who says them?

About Jesus

Carson: *“This section forms something of a bridge. On the one hand, these verses continue the theme of the witness of John the Baptist, begun in the preceding verses (vv. 19-28); on the other, they introduce a lengthy list of titles applied to Jesus, a list that takes up the rest of the chapter:”*

One whose sandals John the Baptist is not worthy to untie.

The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

He was ‘before’ John the Baptist

John the Baptist say the Spirit descends on him.

Will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

He is the Son of God.

This is John’s witness – he is a faithful forerunner to Jesus.

Carson: *“This does not mean that the followers of Jesus portrayed in John 1 enjoyed a thoroughly Christian grasp of the titles they applied to Jesus. Doubtless they were first uttered more in hope than in faith. In fact, of the four Gospels it is John’s that most insistently stresses how much the disciples misunderstood what they confessed. In other words, if John records early confessions, he also emphasizes how little the first confessors understood. This leaves scope for a rising understanding, better portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels.”*

Deeper and Wider

1. Have a look at what the Synoptic Gospels say about John the Baptist? (Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:3-8; Luke 3:2-17)

These passages give us other insights into the ministry of John the Baptist.

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Especially in regard to his message of repentance.

In Luke 1 we are given insights into his birth and in Mark 6:14ff (Matthew 14:1ff; Luke 9:7-9) to his death at the hands of King Herod.

2. **Look at Isaiah 40:1-3 and Malachi 3:1-4; 4:5. What do these passages tell us about the ministry of John the Baptist?**

The Passages

Isaiah 40:1 *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*

2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

3 A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD;

make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.

Malachi 3:1 *"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.*

2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. 3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, 4 and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

Malachi 4:5 *"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.*

First that this is all about the great plan of God. This is not something happening in isolation.

3. **Look at vs. 25, 26-27, 30-31. What is the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus?**

John is the 'introducer' – the announcer – the forerunner.

John knows that Jesus is the greater one to come.

Carson: *"The Baptist's words continue a theme in the Prologue (1:6–8, 15), and betray extraordinary humility in the context of a society where a student was expected to do for his teacher whatever a slave would do—except take off his shoes. John the Baptist makes no exceptions, not even this one, and thereby defines his relation to Jesus the Messiah in a moving way that anticipates 3:30–36."*

We come back to this topic in Study 7.

4. Read and consider v29. What does it mean that Jesus is the Lamb of God? What does John say he has come to do?

Carson: *“Modern Christians are so familiar with the entire clause that it takes an effort of the imagination to recognize that, before the coming and death of Jesus, it was not an obvious messianic designation.”*

The most obvious reference to a Lamb in the Old Testament is the lambs that were slain as part of the Passover meal. It seems to me that this is the reference (even though there is no mention of the taking away of sin in the Exodus story)

Wright: *“By the end of the story, John (the gospel writer, not the Baptist) has made the meaning clear. The death of Jesus takes place, in this gospel, on the afternoon when the Passover lambs were being killed in the Temple. Jesus is the true Passover lamb. John like many New Testament writers but in his own particular way, wants us to understand the events concerning Jesus as a new, and better, Exodus story. Just as God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, so God was now bringing a new people out of an even older and darker slavery”*

Barnett suggest another complementary reference: *“Most likely the combination of the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12:21) with the slaughtered Lamb who is the Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 53:7)”*

Carson: *“Whatever the antecedents of the expression, the sacrifice envisaged is not restricted in its purpose or effectiveness to the Jewish race. This Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world—that is, of all human beings without distinction, though not, as the Prologue has already made clear (1:11–12), of all without exception. This is God’s provision: Jesus is the Lamb of God.”*

Apply

1. What do we learn about being God's messenger from John the Baptist?

John knows his message, knows his place and knows his God. He speaks boldly, bluntly and clearly.

Wright: *"One of the many points to ponder about the strange character of John the Baptist is the way in which all Christian preachers are called to the same attitude John had. We don't preach ourselves, as Paul said, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for his sake (2 Corinthians 4:5). Or as John put it, 'I am only a voice.' There is his humility and his true greatness."*

Barnett: We need to *"Grasp the amazing content of John's testimony to Jesus as the pre-existent one, the Spirit anointed son of God who himself would baptize with the Spirit, and the Lamb of God who was bearing away the sin of the world (replacing temple, priests, animal sacrifices and the Passover). Accept John's testimony to Jesus. Echo it to others, obediently and humbly like John."*

2. How can we speak about Jesus as the 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' to our society today and to our friends and family?

The idea has the 'unfortunate' ideas of sin, sacrifice, and submission in it.

Not things our world is overly fond of. (Well to some extent it seems fond of its sins and doesn't like to be 'called' on them).

But the basis of our messages is this.

Jesus died to make us right with God through the forgiveness of our sins.

For Next Week: Read John 1:35-51

Study 3: JOHN 1:35-51

Belief that: Jesus calls people to follow Him

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

1. Who does Jesus call in this passage??

Strictly, only Philip.

Each of these is directed to Jesus by another.

The chain of people who direct people to Jesus starts with John the Baptist, then Andrew and one other (probably John the writer of this Gospel), then Simon Peter. Then Jesus calls Philip who then speaks to Nathanael.

Carson: *“But strictly speaking Jesus does not ‘call’ his disciples at all in these verses (except possibly Philip: cf. notes on v. 43). They attach themselves to him because of the witness of the Baptist and then because of the witness of the Baptist’s followers.”*

2. What does Andrew say to Simon (Peter)? Why is this significant?

Andrew says he has ‘found the Messiah’.

Remember Andrew in v36 has been directed to Jesus as the ‘Lamb of God’.

The Messiah connection will be explored in one of the later questions.

3. How does Phillip describe Jesus? What is Nathanael’s reaction?

Philip describes Jesus as:

The one Moses wrote about.

The one the Prophets wrote about

Jesus

Of Nazareth

The son of Joseph.

Nathanael makes a rather cynical comment about Nazareth.

Carson: *“Philip responded with the only satisfactory response possible: Come and see. ‘Honest inquiry is a sovereign cure for prejudice. Nazareth might be all that Nathanael thought, but there is an exception to prove every rule; and what an exception these young men had found!’ (Bruce, p. 60). But as in v. 39, not only are these words a challenge to the person in the narrative, but an invitation to the reader.”*

4. What does Jesus promise in v50? In what way is this a promise to us?

That Nathanael will see greater things than these.

And of course in his time with Jesus he will see much greater things that Jesus knowledge of where he was.

For us we see in the Gospel and in the preaching of that down the centuries much, much greater things than these.

Deeper and Wider

- 1. Jesus is called the Messiah again here v41. What is the significance of this? Note the other names given for Jesus in this passage.**

The Messiah (which is the Hebrew form of Christ) simply means one who is anointed.

(Anointing is generally for a specific task or role. In the Old Testament it is Prophets, Priests and Kings who are regularly anointed for their roles.)

Barnett: *“In this Gospel Jesus is recognised from the outset as the Messiah (by Andrew – v41; and by Nathanael – v49). Doubtless it was a somewhat vague and uncertain recognition that progressively became more assured, in particular following the resurrection.”*

Carson: *“the New Testament documents cumulatively present Jesus as the Messiah, i.e. the Anointed One, par excellence—the anointed prophet, priest and king. At this stage Andrew cannot have understood so much, and probably saw in the term ‘Messiah’ a (perhaps royal) designation of the Coming One. The Evangelist translates the term for his Greek readers, rendering it by the corresponding Greek verbal adjective christos (from chrio , ‘to anoint’); hence our ‘the Christ’, understood in the first instance as a title, not a name.”*

Other names are;

Lamb of God

Rabbi

The one Moses wrote about in the Law

The one the Prophets wrote about

Jesus (bar Joseph) of Nazareth.

Son of God

King of Israel.

This is quite a list – the last two particularly are full of meaning.

Barnett: *“At Judea’s heart are the temple, the High Priest and the Pharisees where Jesus found hostility and rejection. Here in Galilee, however, Nathanael made a major confession to Jesus as ‘King of Israel’, that is as Messiah. Much of this Gospel is an interplay between Jerusalem/Judea (negative) and Galilee (positive).”*

Carson: *“Philip’s witness is of a piece with Andrew’s (v. 41), except that he does not call Jesus the Messiah but the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote. That is the stance of this entire Gospel: Jesus fulfils the Old*

Testament Scriptures (*cf.* 5:39). The earliest disciples could not have identified Jesus as the promised Coming One, the Messiah, without believing that the Scriptures pointed to him, for that was part of the common stock of Jewish messianic hope. In this stream of thought, not only the prophets but even ‘the Law’—*i.e.* the Pentateuch—anticipated the coming of the Messiah. Philip refers to no specific passage, but in this chapter Deuteronomy 18:15-19 and Genesis 22 are alluded to (in v. 21 and v. 51 respectively). To this must be added the large stock of material from the rest of the Old Testament, here lumped together as what ‘the prophets’ wrote.”

2. **In v48 Jesus displays supernatural knowledge (see also 2:4; 4:17–18; 6:70; 9:3; 11:4, 11; 13:10–11, 38). What does this tell us about Jesus?**

That this is no mere man.

That the titles being given to Him are true.

Our reaction is to be the same as Nathanael’s – Belief.

3. **In v51 Jesus says ‘I tell you the truth ...’ (literally ‘amen, amen (or truly, truly)). Why would Jesus use such an expression?**

In the John and in the Synoptics this ‘formula’ seems to introduce and saying of importance.

Jesus is drawing attention to it.

There are 78 occurrences of this in the Gospels, 26 of those in John. Carson: *“In introducing this promise, Jesus employs, for the first time, the double ‘Amen, amen’ expression variously rendered ‘Verily, verily’ (AV), ‘truly, truly’ (RSV), or ‘in truth, in very truth’ (NEB). The NIV adapts the entire construction ‘Amen, amen, I say to you’, making it ‘I tell you the truth.’ The original Hebrew word for ‘amen’ comes from a root denoting certainty, steadfastness. It was sometimes appended to the end of prayers (e.g. Ps. 41:13) to voice hearty agreement and solemn wish that the prayer be fulfilled; Jesus uses it before an utterance to confirm and emphasize its trustworthiness and importance. In the Synoptics the expression always occurs singly; in John, always doubled. The term is so characteristic of Jesus that it appears in transliteration even for the Greek-speaking readers of the Gospels.”*

4. **What is the reference in v51 about angels ascending and descending all about?**

The reference seems to be to the story of Jacob and the ladder (Genesis 28:10-22).

The point being made is of Jesus as the symbol of God’s presence. Wright: *“Verse 51, then, seems to be a tight-packed and evocative way of saying: ‘Don’t think that all you will see is one or two remarkable acts of insight, such as you witnessed when I showed*

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you that I know about you before you even appeared. What you'll see from now on is the reality towards which Jacob's ladder, and even the Temple itself, was pointing like a signpost. If you follow me, you'll be watching what it looks like when heaven and earth are open to each other. You won't necessarily see the angels themselves, but you'll see things happening which show that they're there all right."

Carson: "To see heaven opened is to be accorded a vision of divine matters (cf. Acts 10:11; Rev. 4:1; 19:11). What the disciples are promised, then, is heaven-sent confirmation that the one they have acknowledged as the Messiah has been appointed by God. Every Jew honoured Jacob/Israel, the father of the twelve tribes; now everyone must recognize that this same God has appointed Jesus as his Messiah."

Barnett: "The point of the allusion is that Nathanael would see the glory of God resting upon Jesus. That glory would fall upon Jesus on the cross; it is a glory that is seen by the eye of faith."

Apply

1. What ‘names’ do you use for Jesus when you speak about Him?

For discussion

We may in fact be embarrassed by the very ‘high’ things that Jesus is called. But he is all of those things and more.

2. Share how you came to be a ‘disciple’ – a follower of Jesus?

Again for discussion

Wright: *“What Andrew and Simon Peter thought they were doing was looking for the Messiah. What they didn’t realize was that the Messiah was looking for them. Eager in their excitement, they had no idea what this was going to involve for them.”*

Barnett: *“Sometimes it seems easier to develop impersonal programs and mission statement than to build on and strengthen existing human connections. John’s stories of five people following Christ is worth further reflection. What is clear is the importance of people and people based relationships.”*

Barnett: *“Remarkably John has taken us, his hearers, from the timeless eternity before Creation, leaping over the salvation-story of Israel, to the historical incarnation of the Word, the Son of the Father. We have heard the moving testimony of John (the Baptist) and how two of his disciples became disciples of Jesus, one of whom would write this book witnessing to Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. This is bigger and deeper than history of biography. This is the Word of God, by which God addresses the hearers and bids the acknowledge and follow Jesus.”*

For Next Week: Read John 2:1-11

Study 4: JOHN 2:1-11

Belief that: Jesus rules creation and gives good gifts to his people.

Barnett: *“Replacement is the common theme of chapters 2-4. Water used for ritual purification was replaced by wine (2:6). The great temple in Jerusalem as the meeting places with God would be destroyed and replaced by Christ’s own body ‘raised up in three days (2:20). Inheritance of the Kingdom of God as the birthright of Abraham’s descendants would be superseded by re-birth from above, from God himself (3:3). Jacobs ‘water’ (religion of the Patriarchs) was replaced by Jesus ‘living water’ (4:10). Worship of the Father would no longer depend on going to special places like Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim but would be ‘in Spirit and in truth’ (4:23). We see something here of John’s profound theological understand of the centrality and supremacy of Christ, who effectively replaced Jewish practices. Ware moved by this author’s literary artistry in teaching this through his narration of four successive stories.”*

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

1. When and where does this remarkable story take place?

Barnett: *“For all its elegant ‘architectural’ shape and deeply theological character this Gospel is deeply rooted in the soil of the geography of the land and the history of those times.”*

3 days later in the village of Cana.

Carson counts 7days in these early parts of the story with this as the 7th day. In Creation the 7th day was the day of rest, of completeness.

Wright: *“What do you think John is hinting at when he says that all this took place ‘on the third day’?”*

2. What becomes the problem?

There is a (wedding) party on and the wine has run out.

3. What is the ‘solution’?

Jesus is the answer.

The solution he makes in the jars is the very best of wine.

Carson: *“That Jesus’ first miracle takes place at a wedding, and is designed to prevent serious social embarrassment, marks Jesus out as far removed from the monastic asceticism of hermitic communities like Qumran.”*

4. What does v11 say about what has happened?

John calls it a ‘miraculous sign’ – Though there is just one Greek word which means sign.

Carson: *“John prefers the simple word ‘signs’: Jesus’ miracles are never simply naked displays of power, still less neat conjuring tricks to impress the masses, but signs, significant displays of power that point beyond themselves to the deeper realities that could be perceived with the eyes of faith. Jesus himself in this Gospel refers to his miracles and to his other activity as his ‘work’ or ‘works’ (e.g. 5:36; NIV ‘miracle(s)’ in 7:21; 10:25)”*

Wright: *“That is why it simply won’t do, despite what some people have said, to see the things that Jesus did, and the stories about them in this gospel and the other ones, as pleasant but imaginary legends – things that didn’t actually happen but which ‘illustrate’ some supposedly deeper, more ‘spiritual’ truth. The whole point of the signs is that they are moments when heaven and earth intersect with each other (That’s what the Jews believed happened in the temple.)”*

Deeper and Wider

- 1. Read v3-5. What do you make of this exchange between Jesus and Mary? What is the importance of Mary’s response?**

It is not quite as ‘rude’ as it seems.

Carson: *“Like any widow, Mary had leaned hard on her firstborn son. How easy that must have been, with a son like him! Moreover, from a literary point of view, John repeatedly records Jesus’ interlocutors operating at a purely human, natural level, while Jesus himself transcends their questions, demands or expectations (3:3, 4; 4:15, 47; 5:6–7; 6:32–33, 41; 11:22–24). This interpretation of 2:3 fits into the same pattern.”*

Jesus is now making the running himself. His time is his own time. Mary recognises both these things and says – ‘do what he says’.

Carson: *“In saying to the servants, Do whatever he tells you, Jesus’ mother shakes off the gentle rebuke and exemplifies the best kind of persevering faith. Like the Canaanite woman who was rebuked for her presumptuous approach, but who persevered and was praised for her faith (Mt. 15:21-28), so Mary is rebuked for presuming on the family tie, yet displays faith that is perfectly content to leave the matter in Jesus’ hands. This sort of pattern occurs elsewhere in John: Jesus initially refuses a request for assistance, then proceeds to help in his own way, often in response to a further demonstration of faith (4:47–50; cf. 11:21–44).”*

- 2. What is the significance of this miraculous supply of wine? Jeremiah 31:12; Hosea 14:7; Amos. 9:13-14**

Wine is a symbol of God’s abundant provision.

The verses

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Jeremiah 31:12 *They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD — the grain, the new wine and the oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more.*

Hosea 14:7 *Men will dwell again in his shade. He will flourish like the grain. He will blossom like a vine, and his fame will be like the wine from Lebanon.*

Amos 9:13 *“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. 14 I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit.*

And the provision was certainly abundant here. There is at least 540 litres of wine involved.

(Though it is worth noting Carson’s view that the miracle takes place as the wine is dipped out).

3. **What were the Jars there for? Why might this be significant?**

The Jars were there for ritual washing.

Jewish Ceremonial use.

Jesus makes it useless for that (if it is all changed)

A sign that Jesus supersedes the Jewish ceremonial laws and regulations. This theme continues in this section of the Gospel.

Wright: *“The water jars, used for Jewish Purification rites, are a sign that God is doing a new thing from within the old Jewish system, bringing purification to Israel and the world in a whole new way.”*

4. **Look at the other signs in John’s Gospel briefly. (4:43ff; 5:1ff; 6:1ff; 6:16ff; 9:1ff and 11:1ff) What does each of them show?**

These are all familiar stories. The point is just to see the incidents that John chooses to show in his Gospel and the things they show us about Jesus.

Carson: *“Some hold that John has a scheme of seven signs, culminating in the resurrection of Lazarus; others link the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water (Jn. 6) as one sign, making the seventh the resurrection of Jesus himself. Because John does not specifically label all the miracles ‘signs’, it is hard to be certain that John intended either outline. What is clear is that this first sign is linked with the summary statement of the purpose of the book in 20:30–31. In both places, the disciples saw and believed (2:11; 20:29). The time would come when blessing would*

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be pronounced on new generations of followers who could not possibly see these events, but who have nevertheless believed and seen something of the glory of the Son (20:29)."

Apply

1. **Where do you put your trust for the provisions you need?**

Well ????

Or thinking about it differently - Wright: *"You might want to pray through this story with your own failures and disappointments in mind – remembering that transformation only come when someone took Mary's words seriously: 'Do whatever he tells you.'"*

2. **What example does Mary provide here?**

Of patient, active, trust in Jesus.

For Next Week: Read John 2:12-25

Study 5: JOHN 2:12-25

Belief that: Jesus stands for truth and right worship.

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

1. Where does Jesus go now and then where? Why?

Jesus now goes to Capernaum (which seems from the synoptics to be his 'home' town)

A few days later near the time of the Passover he goes (as all Jews 'should') to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast.

Jesus, I assume, goes to Capernaum to rest and see his family.

Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Passover feast.

Carson: "The festival of Passover was celebrated on the 14th day of the lunar month Nisan (full moon at the end of March or beginning of April). It commemorated the night when the angel of death 'passed over' the homes daubed with blood in the prescribed manner, killing the firstborn in all other homes. In the consternation and revulsion that followed, the Jews escaped from Egypt (Ex. 12)"

Wright: "It is Passover time; and now he goes to Jerusalem at the time when liberation, freedom, rescue from slavery was being celebrated. Somehow John wants us to understand, what Jesus did in the Temple is a hint of the new meaning he is giving to Passover."

From John's Gospel it is evident that Jesus went to Jerusalem several times during his ministry years. The Synoptic Gospels focus on the final visit which leads to the crucifixion. I think it is quite reasonable (and plausible) that Jesus cleared the Temple at this earlier visit and on his last visit to Jerusalem.

2. Describe the events in Jerusalem.

Sticking to the events (and not the words).

Jesus goes to the temple court, he observes the bazaar situation there.

He acts – makes a whip, drives the cattle etc. out, turns over the tables.

The authorities demand an explanation – and a sign.

Jesus replies.

Jesus does many other miraculous signs – many believe.

3. What is the response of the 'powers that be'?

Naturally enough they challenge this 'disturber of the peace.'

They have the earthly authority and clearly this is a major disruption of what they are responsible for: The Temple.

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Though the request for a sign is interesting.

They are obviously aware of some things about this Jesus of Nazareth.

4. Read v23-24. What is the significance of this comment by John?

It shows Jesus' awareness of the various types of belief that people were showing.

Carson: *"At the same Passover festival, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. We are thereby briefly reminded of the wide-ranging ministry Jesus had already undertaken, even if relatively few individual narratives have been preserved for us (cf. 20:30–31). The people 'believed in his name': even though their faith is spurious" . To exercise faith on the grounds of having witnessed miraculous signs is precarious (4:48; cf. Mk. 8:11-13). Although miracles cannot command faith (10:32), it is better to believe on the ground of miracles than not at all (cf. 10:38)." And "He therefore did not entrust himself to these spurious converts. (The Greek repeats the verb, but with a slightly different meaning: we might paraphrase, 'the people trusted in his name, but he did not entrust himself to them.')* By implication, Jesus wonderfully promises to entrust himself to those who truly trust him (cf. 10:14, 15)."

Deeper and Wider

1. What reason does Jesus give for his actions in the Temple?

v16 and 17 are the clue.

He is offended that the Temple is turned into a market.

Note v 17 – He is the one with a passion for the Temple and its right worship.

Wright: *"The temple was the beating heart of Judaism. It wasn't just, as it were, a church on a street corner. It was the centre of worship and music, of politics and society, of national celebration and mourning. ... it was of course the place where Israel's God, YHWH, had promised to live in the midst of his people. It was the focal point of the nation, and of the national way of life."*

Carson: *"Dodd suggests there is an allusion, to Zechariah 14:21: 'And on that day there will no longer be a merchant in the house of the Lord Almighty.' Equally, John may be alluding to Malachi 3:1, 3: 'Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple...he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.' This means that this act of prophetic symbolism was a denunciation of worship that was not pure (cf. also Ezk. 10:15-19; Eze 11:22–23). It was a prophetic invitation to worship God from the heart, without clamour or distracting influences."*

2. Why is the market in the temple a problem?

The market was in the court of the gentiles effectively excluding gentiles from the only area in the temple they could go and presumably learn about the God of Israel.

There is a concern here for ‘profit’ and not worship.

Carson *“Jesus’ complaint is not that they are guilty of sharp business practices and should therefore reform their ethical life, but that they should not be in the temple area at all. How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market! he exclaims. Instead of solemn dignity and the murmur of prayer, there is the bellowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep. Instead of brokenness and contrition, holy adoration and prolonged petition, there is noisy commerce.”*

3. What is Jesus talking about in v19? Note John’s comment in v22?

There has been a theme of the Temple and the Jewish rituals being replaced by Jesus and what he will do running through these early chapters (and it will continue) and now Jesus speaks of the Temple of his own body.

John’s comment shows that it took a resurrection to show the apostles the significance of all this.

Wright: *“He is the true temple: he is the Word made flesh, the place where the glory of God has chosen to make his dwelling ... He is the reality to which the Temple itself points. His death and resurrection will be the reality to which the whole Passover celebration points.”*

Carson: *“Jesus’ enigmatic response was understood neither by his interlocutors (cf. v. 20) nor by his disciples (v. 22). On the face of it, Jesus was inviting the authorities to destroy the temple, and was promising to raise it again within three days of its destruction. At the literal level, they were unlikely to call his bluff. They were nevertheless stymied, since he was offering them a powerful ‘miraculous sign’ to justify his authority for cleansing the temple. Indeed, it was a marvellously appropriate sign: anyone who could restore the temple within three days of its complete destruction must be judged to have the authority to regulate its practices.”*

4. Look at Malachi 3:1,3; Psalm 69:9. How do these verses help us to understand Jesus’ actions?

Malachi 3:1 *“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty. ... 3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like*

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gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,

Psalms 69:9 for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.

First we see they are predicted.

It shows that God is working out his eternal plan.

Apply

1. Consider how we might pollute our right worship of God?

An interesting thought – for discussion.

One we can do it is by putting too much emphasis on the place we meet. Barnett: *“Christian believers usually meet in buildings, but that is a convenience, not a necessity. The building has no theological significance, only the ‘body’ of people who gather there. Like the family house the church building may be aesthetically attractive and there is no reason it should not be. But neither its aesthetics, nor the use to which it is put, give it any special theological quality. God does not dwell in temples made by human hands (see Acts 17:24)”*

2. Do we stand up for the truth the way Jesus did?

I don't mean make a whip and chase people and livestock around.

But our faith is constantly challenged in our society by commercial and secular interests. The question is what do we do about it.

(Second thoughts maybe a whip is a good idea!!!)

For Next Week: Read John 3:1-21

Study 6: JOHN 3:1-21

Belief that: Jesus brings new birth.

Carson: “*The one who ‘knew all men’, who ‘did not need man’s testimony about man’ (2:24–25), now enters into a number of conversations in which he instantly gets to the heart of individuals with highly diverse backgrounds and needs—Nicodemus (3:1–15), the Samaritan woman (4:1–26), the Gentile official (4:43–53), the man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1–15), and more.*”

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

1. Which representative of ‘men’ (see 2:24-25) now comes to Jesus?

‘a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council’

This is an establishment ‘guy’ and a well-educated member of the elite of Jewish society.

All the right credentials to be one of the ‘Jews’ who seem to oppose Jesus.

He is in some senses a representative Jew and a representative of those mentioned at the end of the last chapter.

Carson: “*The most natural reading of 3:1–15 is that at this point Nicodemus, though interested, is not particularly open to the truth (after all, Jesus’ signs serve Nicodemus as a conversation starter, not, as in 2:23–25, as a trigger for faith, spurious or otherwise), yet eventually he comes around to side with Jesus (7:45–52) and ultimately to take his place at Calvary (19:38–42).*”

There are a few ‘interviews’ by individuals with Jesus in this gospel particularly this one and the woman in chapter 4.

2. Where does Jesus reply direct Nicodemus? How does the conversation flow?

(Note that Nicodemus has not even actually asked a question at this stage.)

Jesus begins his answer with the solemn ‘Amen Amen’ (NIV – ‘I tell you the truth.’)

And introduces the whole incredible idea of a new birth and the notion of seeing the ‘kingdom of God’.

Nicodemus looks at this physically and Jesus challenges him to consider it Spiritually.

Carson: “*This regeneration is and then a word that can mean ‘from above’ or ‘again’. Because Nicodemus understood it to mean ‘again’ (cf. ‘a second time’, v. 4), and Jesus did not correct him, some have argued that ‘again’ must stand. But Jesus also insists that this new birth, this new begetting, this new regeneration, must*

*be the work of the Spirit, who comes from the realm of the 'above'. Certainly the other occurrences of **ano** then in John mean 'from above' (3:31; 19:11, 23). As he does with other terms, John may be choosing to extend double meaning to this one in John 3:3, 7, both 'from above' and 'again'; he certainly does not mean less than the former. Readers who have followed the Gospel to this point will instantly think (as Nicodemus couldn't) of John 1:12-13: 'to be born again' or 'to be born from above' must mean the same thing as 'to become children of God', to be 'born of God', by believing in the name of the incarnate Word."*

3. Who is condemned and who is not condemned (v10ff and v18)?

Those who turn to the Son of Man (Jesus) are saved – 'have eternal life'.

Those who are condemned are those who 'do not accept our testimony'

Said more directly in v18

4. John 3:16 is very very familiar to us? How does the context of the verse affect our understanding of it?

First I think it is best to take this as a comment from John (from v 16 through to v21) rather than a continuation of the words of Jesus. And the verse is very familiar though often used without any thought of the judgement mentioned in v18ff.

Carson: *"This dual stance of God is a commonplace of biblical theology. The holy God finds wicked actions to be detestable things (Ezk. 18:10-13), but that does not prevent him from crying out, 'Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?' (Ezk. 18:23)."*

And often the stress is on God loving (rightly so) without the stress on 'believes in him' and what that means.

Carson: *"More than any New Testament writer, John develops a theology of the love relations between the Father and the Son, and makes it clear that, as applied to human beings, the love of God is not the consequence of their loveliness but of the sublime truth that 'God is love' (1 Jn. 4:16).*

Barnett: *"God's gift of his Son was for a purpose, to save those who believe in him. Nonetheless, rejection of the Son brings its own inevitable consequences, confirming unbelievers in their present circumstances. They are lost, 'perishing'."*

Deeper and Wider

1. Discuss what is the nature of being 'born again'.

For discussion.

I think it is more than just a new beginning.

Wright: *“The Judaism that Nicodemus and Jesus both knew had a good deal to do with being born into the right family. What mattered was being a child of Abraham. Of course other things mattered too, but this was basic. Now, Jesus is saying, God is starting a new family in which this ordinary birth isn’t enough. You need to be born all over again, born ‘from above’. (The same word, here, can mean ‘a second time’ and ‘from above’. We should probably understand both, with the emphasis on ‘from above’; the point, as with 1:12-13, is that the initiative remains God’s.”*

Barnett: *“The old ‘natural birth’ by descent from Abraham was replaced by ‘birth from above’ from God himself as the only means of entrance to the kingdom of God.”*

Barnett: *“Easily missed is that Jesus was actually addressing the nation of Israel in the person of this noted individual”* The Greek in v 7 and 11 has the personal pronouns as plurals.

Carson *“If Nicodemus, with his knowledge, gifts, understanding, position and integrity cannot enter the promised kingdom by virtue of his standing and works, what hope is there for anyone who seeks salvation along such lines? Even for a Nicodemus, there must be a radical transformation, the generation of new life, comparable with physical birth. Barrett finely cites Calvin: ‘by the term born again He means not the amendment of a part but the renewal of the whole nature. Hence it follows that there is nothing in us that is not defective’.”*

2. In v3 what does Jesus mean by the ‘kingdom of God?’

God’s Kingdom is not a place but an activity - His rule over all things.

Carson: *“The full expression ‘the kingdom of God’ is not found in the Old Testament, though a number of passages speak of the Lord’s kingdom, or, more dynamically, insist that the Lord reigns, or that the Lord is king (e.g. Ex. 15:18; Ps. 93:1; 103:19). These texts speak of the universal sweep of God’s sovereignty. Everyone is ‘in’ that kingdom, whether or not one knows it or likes it. But the prophets also foresaw the advent of a kingdom at the end of history, presided over by a son of David (Is. 9:1-7; 11; Zc. 9:9-10), by the Lord’s servant (Is. 42:1ff.; 49:1ff.), by the Lord himself (Is. 9:1-7; 33:2; Zc. 14:9). The coming ruler was thus differentiated from the Lord, and in other passages identified with him—just as the Word is both differentiated from God, and identified with him (Jn. 1:1). Modelled on God’s covenant relationship with the people of Israel (Ex. 19:5-6; Dt. 33:5), the kingdom concept received decisive shaping in the promise that David’s line would be everlasting (2 Sa.*

7:12-16). Future aspects of the kingdom are not neglected by Old Testament writers (Is. 11:1ff.; Dn. 2:44; 7:14, 27), including the prospect of resurrection life (Dn. 12:1-3).

To a Jew with the background and convictions of Nicodemus, 'to see the kingdom of God' was to participate in the kingdom at the end of the age, to experience eternal, resurrection life. The same equivalence is found in the Synoptics (cf. Mk. 9:43, 45 'to enter life', parallel to 9:47 'to enter the kingdom of God'); it is particularly strong in the Fourth Gospel, where 'kingdom' language crops up only here (3:3, 5) and at Jesus' trial (18:36), while 'life' language predominates. One of the most startling features of the kingdom announced in the Synoptics is that it is not exclusively future. The kingdom, God's saving and transforming reign, has in certain respects already been inaugurated in the person, works and message of Jesus. John stresses this 'inaugurated' or 'realized' component of the long-awaited salvation even more. True, he can refer to the resurrection (5:28-29) and speak unambiguously of what takes place at the last day (e.g. Jn. 6:40), but it is far more characteristic of him to stress entry into life and participation in the eternal life now (e.g. Jn. 3:16).

If the kingdom does not dawn until the end of the age, then of course one cannot enter it before it comes. Predominant religious thought in Jesus' day affirmed that all Jews would be admitted to that kingdom apart from those guilty of deliberate apostasy or extraordinary wickedness (e.g. Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1). But here was Jesus telling Nicodemus, a respected and conscientious member not only of Israel but of the Sanhedrin, that he cannot enter the kingdom unless he is born again."

Wright: "As with 1:12-13, the point is that God's kingdom is now thrown open to anyone and everyone."

Barnett: "The truly radical element here is that the kingdom/eternal life must be entered right now. Previously it was believed that the kingdom/eternal life only came at the end of history. ... Salvation, eternal life, the kingdom of God is the present possession of those who like iron filings have been magnetically drawn to the Son of God and are now attached to Him."

3. Consider v14. What will it mean for Jesus to be 'lifted up'? (See Numbers 21:4-9)

The story in Numbers is but a small incident in the cycle of disobedience, punishment, grace which is the story of Israel on the way to the promised land.

But Jesus picks up the idea of the bronze serpent raised up to speak of his own death on a cross.

So that any who 'look' to him (as with the snake in the desert) will be saved.

This is a prediction of Jesus death.

Wright: *"Here it points clearly to the death of Jesus. Moses put the serpent on a pole, and lifted it up so the people could see it; even so the son of man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. Humankind as a whole has been smitten with a deadly disease. The only cure is to look at the son of man dying on the cross, and find life through believing in him."*

Carson: *"the deepest point of connection between the bronze snake and Jesus was in the act of being 'lifted up'. Moses lifted up the snake on a pole so that all who were afflicted in the camp might look and live. In the same way, the Son of Man must be lifted up. The Greek verb for 'lifted up' (hypsōō) in its four occurrences in this Gospel (cf. 8:28; 12:32, 34) always combines the notions of being physically lifted up on the cross, with the notion of exaltation."*

Wright: *"God's action in the crucifixion of Jesus has planted a sign in the middle of history. And the sign says: believe and live."*

4. What is the significance of the reference to light and darkness in v19-21? (note John 1:4-5;8-9)

Again this is possibly referring to the 'light' of creation but more likely to moral light (good) as opposed to moral darkness (evil)

It seems that truth and light are paralleled in v21

In Chapter 1

John 1:4 *In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

John 1:8 *He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.*

We need to remember that Jesus is the light.

Note: 1John 2:8 *Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.*

Carson concludes: *"The purpose of these three verses, then, is not to encourage readers to think they fall into a deterministic category bound up with their intrinsic nature, but to make them see the imminence of their danger (the verdict is being declared), and the fundamentally moral reasons why people hate the light. John stresses these points in the hope that his readers will beseech God*

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that all they do may be done through him—in short, that they will turn to the ‘lifted up’ Son of Man with the same simple, desperate, unqualified faith as the Israelites displayed who turned to the bronze snake in the desert (vv. 13-15). By such faith and such faith alone can anyone experience the new birth (vv. 3, 5) and thereby gain eternal life (vv. 15-16).”

Remember Nicodemus came ‘at night’.

Carson on why John records this fact: *“The best clue lies in John’s use of ‘night’ elsewhere: in each instance (3:2; 9:4; 11:10; 13:30) the word is either used metaphorically for moral and spiritual darkness, or, if it refers to the night-time hours, it bears the same moral and spiritual symbolism. Doubtless Nicodemus approached Jesus at night, but his own ‘night’ was blacker than he knew.”*

Apply

1. How is Nicodemus an example to us (both positively and negatively)?

Discuss this one.

My thoughts:

Positively – he came seeking, he sought to understand what Jesus said, and he ultimately responded. (See John 7:45-52; John 19:38-42).

Negatively – he came at night (secretly) and Barnett suggest ‘blindly’ or in the dark about Jesus true identity, he finds it hard to think outside the square.

Barnett: *“He symbolises human inability to comprehend Jesus unaided, regardless of intellect.”*

2. How do we show and teach John 3:16 to our community?

For discussion.

Carson: *“Because John 3:16 is sandwiched between vv. 14-15 and v. 17, the fact that God gave his one and only Son is tied both to the Son’s incarnation (v. 17) and to his death (vv. 14-15). That is the immediate result of the love of God for the world: the mission of the Son. His ultimate purpose is the salvation of those in the world who believe in him (eis auton, not en auto as in v. 15). Whoever believes in him experiences new birth (3:3, 5), has eternal life (3:15, 16), is saved (3:17); the alternative is to perish (cf. also 10:28), to lose one’s life (12:25), to be doomed to destruction (17:12, cognate with ‘to perish’). There is no third option.”*

Barnett: *“The importance of v16-21 could not be clearer. Such was God’s immeasurable love that he gave his only son in crucifixion and death to life to perishing. John is making the strongest and most passionate plea, base on his witness, that we, the hearers of his Gospel by faith lay hold of the Son of God.”*

For Next Week: Read John 3:22-36

***Study 7:* JOHN 3:22-36**

Belief that: Jesus is the greater one who brings eternal life.

Carson: “*This is the fourth successive section to point out ways in which Jesus fulfils and surpasses Judaism: in 2:1–11, Jesus provides new wine that vastly surpasses anything that contemporary Judaism could afford, and renders obsolete the stone jars of purification; in 2:12–25, Jesus displaces the temple and thereby intimates that the temple’s proper role is best seen as an anticipation of the ultimate point of mediation between God and man; in 3:1–21, Jesus fulfils prophecies of a ‘water and spirit’ regeneration, and proves in his death to be the ultimate antitype of the snake ‘lifted up’ in the desert; and hence (3:22–30) Jesus surpasses John the Baptist and any baptism or rite of purification he may represent. In the next chapter (4:1ff.), the uniqueness of Jesus will be set against movements that extend beyond the boundaries of Palestinian Judaism.*”

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

1. What ‘problem’ gives rise to this discussion?

That Jesus is ‘also’ baptising – well actually his disciples were (4:2).

Carson: “*Only the Fourth Gospel mentions that Jesus baptized, and 4:2 specifies that he himself did not perform the rite but left it to his disciples. The context requires that this be taken as water baptism, not the baptism in the Holy Spirit the Baptist promised Jesus would administer (1:33; cf. 7:37–39).*”

John the Baptist’s disciples are a little miffed by this and by the fact that more people (‘everyone’ v26 is probably and exaggeration) are now following Jesus.

2. In his reply what does John the Baptist say about himself and Jesus?

John acknowledges yet again that he is not the One who is to Come but rather the forerunner.

He is the ‘friend’ not the bridegroom.

He is the one sent ahead not the Christ

He comes from the earth not from ‘above.’

He must become ‘less’ not ‘greater’

Barnett: “*It is significant that John did not respond to this man but directed all his attention to Jesus.*”

3. What does John say he must become?

The word he uses is less.

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His job is just about done – though he does not know at this stage that not long from now he will be beheaded by Herod (Giving a whole new meaning to less!) (See Mark 6:14ff)

4. **What do v31-36 tell us about Jesus and about our response to Him?**

These probably are not John the Baptist's words but John the gospel writer's. (Like 3:16-21).

Jesus

Is from Above

Speaks of what he has seen and heard

Speaks the words of God

The Son

Has everything placed in his hands.

Response is simple – see v36

Carson on v36: *“This verse is a fitting climax to the entire chapter. By laying out the only two alternatives, genuine faith and defiant disobedience, this verse once more brings to the fore the threat of looming judgment (cf. vv. 19-21). Whoever believes the Son (cf. 1:12; 3:3, 5, 15, 16) has eternal life, i.e. the life of the age to come, experienced now even if consummated only later (cf. 5:20–21, 25-26; 17:2). But whoever disobeys the Son (that is what the verb means, though NIV's whoever rejects the Son is close enough) will not see life (cf. ‘seeing’ the kingdom of God, v. 3), for God’s wrath remains on him. If faith in the Son is the only way to inherit eternal life, and is commanded by God himself, then failure to trust him is as much disobedience as unbelief. The antithesis to seeing life is seeing death (8:51). Judgment has already been threatened (vv. 19-20); now it is alarmingly explicit.”*

Deeper and Wider

1. **Why are John the Baptist's disciples reacting this way?**

In one sense it is perfectly natural. They are committed to John the Baptist and his cause and this looks like a rival group – grown out of John the Baptist's group which seems more popular.

2. **Discuss the everyday truth of v27. How show that affect our lives?**

We all in God's service are given the ministry we have to do.

Whether that is in high position or low. What God gives us to do we ought to do. Wright reminds us *“C.S. Lewis once put it, to play great parts without pride, and small parts without shame.”*

Carson on v27: *“For John the Baptist to have wished he were someone else, called to serve in a way many would judge more prominent, would simply be covetousness by another name; if the person he envied were the Messiah himself, he would be annulling the excellent ministry God had given him. Deep discontent over God's wise, sovereign disposition of people and things would in*

that instance betray not only unbelief and faithfulness, but the worst form of the perennial human sin, the arrogance that wants to be God and stand where God stands.”

3. **What image does John use to describe his position? Read Isaiah 62:4-5; Jeremiah 2:2; Hosea 2:16-20? What is the background to John’s metaphor?**

He speaks as being the friend of the bridegroom (the best man).

The Old Testament Connection:

Isaiah 62:4 *No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married. 5 As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.*

Jeremiah 2:2 *“Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: “ ‘I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown.*

Hosea 2:16 *“In that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’ 17 I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked. 18 In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety. 19 I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. 20 I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.*

Carson: *“The Evangelist could not have been unaware of the fact that the post-resurrection church would picture Christ as the bridegroom and his church as the bride—the continuation and transformation of the Old Testament theme (e.g. 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 21:2, 9; 22:17). The joy of the ‘best man’ belongs to the Baptist, and it is now complete. This Gospel repeatedly associates ‘joy’ with the verb *plēroun* (‘to fulfil’, ‘to complete’); here John the Baptist means that he has the final and ultimate satisfaction of knowing that his God-given (v. 27) ministry has been successful. The rising prominence of Jesus, as upsetting as it may have been to some of John’s disciples, floods John himself with surpassing joy, because that was exactly what he himself had worked for.”*

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4. How should we ‘preach’ the balance expressed in v36.

There is a great temptation in our ‘nice’ world to leave the reality of God’s judgment out of our witness to Jesus.

BUT sin is real and judgment is real.

We need to have the balance.

Apply

1. John talks about being the ‘friend of the bridegroom’. How do you cope with pride about being a Christian?

Perhaps an obscure question.

I think sometimes we see ourselves as better because we have accepted God’s grace. (Worth considering some of the words to some of the songs we sing)

Anyway ... for discussion

2. How hard (or easy) is it to put John 3:27 into practice in our post-modern, self-centred world?

For discussion

For Next Week: Read John 4:1-26.

Study 8: JOHN 4:1-26

Belief that: Jesus brings 'living water'.

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

- 1. Who does Jesus meet at 'Jacob's Well'? What is unusual about this encounter?**

Jesus meets a person drawing water at the well.

The Person is a Samaritan, is a woman and it is Midday. Each of these is significant and 'unusual'.

First – Samaritan – The Jews have nothing to do with Samaritans – The Samaritans were the people who remained in Palestine during the exile and who maintained a 'different' worship of God. There had been violence, hatred and general antagonism since the return from Babylon 400 years previously. – And Jesus is talking with this person.

Second she is a Woman. – A Jewish man was expected to avoid public contact with a woman in order to avoid ritual uncleanness, gossip, and the possibility of immorality. – And Jesus asks her to draw water for him.

Third, it is the middle of the day so what is the Samaritan Woman doing here at the heat of the day? It would appear she is avoiding the other women who would come to draw water at the beginning and the end of the day in the cool. -And Jesus engages in a long conversation with her.

- 2. How does the dialogue flow? What is Jesus' point? What is the basis of the woman's misunderstanding?**

Wright: *"Again and attain in this gospel Jesus talks to people who misunderstand what he says. He is talking at the heavenly level, and they are listening at the earthly level."*

The conversation revolves around water.

The kind in the well and the kind Jesus calls 'living water' (could be a common name for water running in streams and lakes).

There are earthly and heavenly understandings here.

The woman keeps turning to the earthly, Jesus increasingly is referring to the heavenly.

3. **Why does Jesus turn the conversation to her domestic ‘arrangements’?**

Jesus, with his supernatural knowledge (see 1:47-48), now calls this woman to personal account.

Wright: *“Put your finger on the ‘sore’ spot and people will at once start talking about something else. And the best subject for distracting attention from morality is, of course, religion.”*

Carson: *“Of course, by displaying his knowledge of her morally messy past (vv. 17-18) Jesus is exhibiting his own more-than-human knowledge a point the woman understands (v. 19). Nevertheless his remark is not designed to be merely self-revealing: rather, it is designed to help the woman come to terms with the nature of the gift he is offering.”*

4. **What is Jesus claiming in v26?**

“It’s Me!” he says.

That he is the Christ – the son of God.

Barnett: *“His next words were shattering, ‘I who speak to you am he’. She addressed him as a Prophet and he claimed to be the Messiah – and more. His actual words, ‘I AM who is speaking to you’ (v26; see Exodus 3:14). He is the Messiah and his is also – God.”*

The woman’s last cop out – Let’s see what the Messiah might say about this – is gone.

She is talking to the Messiah, the Son of God.

We see her reaction next week.

Deeper and Wider

1. **Trace Jesus’ movements at the start of the chapter (v1-6). Why is he moving, where is he going? Where does he pass through? (Where have the disciples gone?)**

Jesus now moves from Judea (the area around Jerusalem) back to Galilee (his ‘home’ area).

It appears he does not want too much of a confrontation with the Pharisees at this stage. He moves on.

Jesus chooses the more direct route through Samaria though the Jews tended to avoid this because of the antagonism between the Samaritans and the Jews and the possibility of attack.

(The disciples have gone to buy lunch.)

2. **What is the point of the water symbolism in this passage? Consider Jeremiah 2:13 and Zechariah 14:8.**

There are at least 2 levels at which water is being talked about here. (Though the idea that ‘living water’ may be an expression for running water could add a third)

Palestine is a dry place and water is important and treated with respect.

The existence of the well is the natural starting point.

Jesus begins by talking about the water in the well and goes on to talk of the spiritual 'living water' he can offer.

The woman is stuck with earthly images and earthly interpretations.

Jeremiah 2:13 "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."

Zechariah 14:8 On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter.

In the promised land it was God who provided the water – he would send the rains and the land would flow with milk and honey – if the people were obedient.

Jesus brings the living water that Zechariah speaks about.

Carson: "In John's Gospel there are passages where Jesus is the living water as he is the bread from heaven (6:35), and other passages where he gives the living water to believers. In this chapter, the water is the satisfying eternal life mediated by the Spirit that only Jesus, the Messiah and Saviour of the world, can provide." And "Again there are echoes of Old Testament promises. In the day of God's salvation, with joy God's people 'will draw water from the wells of salvation' (Is. 12:3). 'They will neither hunger nor thirst' (Is. 49:10; cf. Rev. 7:16); the pouring out of God's Spirit will be like pouring 'water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground' (Is. 44:3)."

3. What does the passage tell us about 'worship'? Note v20-26?

In short that it is focussed in Jesus.

Wright: "When Solomon dedicated the Temple a thousand years before, he was quite clear that heaven itself wasn't big enough for God, so that one single building couldn't hope to contain him. Holy buildings, and holy mountains, are at best signposts to the real thing. If they become substitutes for it, you're in trouble." See 1 Kings 8:27-30

Carson: "Jesus' response to the woman (vv. 21-24) is given in three parts. First, he announces the impending obsolescence of both the Jerusalem temple and the Mount Gerizim site as definitive places of worship (v. 21). Nevertheless, he insists, salvation springs from the Jews, not the Samaritans (v. 22). And finally, he explains more positively the nature of the worship that forever renders obsolete the conflicting claims of Jerusalem and Gerizim (vv. 23-24)."

4. Compare and contrast Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus and with this Woman.

For discussion really.

Note the contrasting status of the people, the different time, the initiator of the conversation.

The similarities are in the area of the use of earthly imagery which both the woman and Nicodemus seemed determined not to understand.

Both can engage Jesus in theological discussion to some depth but in the end the truth must be revealed to them by God's Spirit.

Carson: "John may intend a contrast between the woman of this narrative and Nicodemus of ch. 3. He was learned, powerful, respected, orthodox, theologically trained; she was unschooled, without influence, despised, capable only of folk religion. He was a man, a Jew, a ruler; she was a woman, a Samaritan, a moral outcast. And both needed Jesus."

Apply

1. What 'waters' do we turn to rather than the living waters of Jesus?

For discussion.

We seek other things to satisfy us.

Barnett: *"New Testament faith easily becomes either empty ceremonial or frantically busy activism or merely cerebral. Ask yourself, 'Am I being refreshed by the 'living water' from the cup of the 'Living God'."*

2. How do we get the 'living water' message across to our neighbour and our world?

For discussion.

Carson: *"Both in the Fourth Gospel and in the Synoptics, the sheer flexibility of Jesus leaps from the pages as he deals with a wide array of different people and their varied needs. No less startling (though more often ignored) is the manner in which Jesus commonly drives to the individual's greatest sin, hopelessness, guilt, despair, need. This should not be surprising: if he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29, 34), inevitably he will deal with sin in those who express some interest in knowing and following him."*

For Next Week: Read John 4:27-42.

Study 9: JOHN 4:27-42

Belief that: Jesus brings in the harvest of the Kingdom

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

1. **Who now rejoins Jesus? What is their first reaction to what they see Jesus doing?**

The disciples now come back, with lunch.

A stunned (surprised) silence.

Here is Jesus talking to a woman, a Samaritan.

2. **What is the woman's 'witness'?**

Meanwhile the woman leaves and she goes back to her village.

Her message is about the supernatural thing this man has done.

The first part of her statement probably raised some eyebrows in the village.

The final question – “Could this be the Christ?” – is the more telling – She is not yet convinced but is on the way.

Wright: *“From the woman's point of view, the conversation has thrown her into happy confusion: she seems to regard Jesus as a cross between a fortune teller and a Messiah, but at least it's given her the energy to go and tell other people about him.”*

Barnett: *“Thus we must notice something we might easily miss, that is to say, her (the woman's) changing attitude to him. It began as the slightly hostile, ‘You are a Jew ...’ (v9) and became more respectful ‘Sir’ (v11,15). Her rather sarcastic, ‘Are you greater than our father Jacob’ (v12) changed to recognition that he was a prophet (because he knew everything about her – v19). Finally she suggested to her fellow Samaritans that this Jew was the Messiah (v29,39). Like Nicodemus her conversion was a ‘pilgrimage’ that began unpromisingly and finished wonderfully.”*

3. **Why the discussion about food? What is the point Jesus makes to the disciples?**

Well it is natural in one sense – they have been off buying some lunch.

Again in this conversation there is spiritual meaning and ‘natural’ misunderstanding.

I am inclined to think it would have been quite perplexing at times to be around Jesus.

4. **What do the Samaritans conclude about Jesus?**

“This man really is the Saviour of the world.”

Worth considering the process by which they have got to this final statement.

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The woman meets Jesus.
Discusses living water and then her lifestyle with him.
Hears Jesus say he is the Christ.
The woman goes and tells her neighbours still questioning.
The townspeople go to see this wonder worker for themselves.
They 'hear for themselves'
And they BELIEVE.

Worth thinking this through in regard to our own witness for Jesus.

Deeper and Wider

1. **The woman goes 'leaving her water jar'. What is the possible symbolism in this?**

It is a seemingly irrelevant fact.

But it would seem that the woman having received just a taste of the 'living water' no longer see the well water that she came out to get as important. Barnett: *"With stunning but understated symbolism the author tells us that the woman left behind her water pot to tell her fellow Samaritans the good news of the messiah. The water pot belonged to the past, and Jesus the messiah held the keys to the future."*

Carson wants us to look further: *"More striking is her eagerness to bear witness before the townspeople whom she had previously had reason to avoid. From Jesus' knowledge of her personal life she had concluded he must be, at very least, a prophet (v. 19; cf. 1:48); from the ensuing discussion she had begun to perceive that he was the prophet. Now, relating the steps in her thinking to her people, she exhorts them, Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did—which may be hyperbole, but quietly attests how central her messy and sinful personal life was to her own thinking. But if a stranger knows so much, may he not know more? She asks, with evident excitement but still some hesitation (me ti), Could this be the Christ?"*

2. Read Deuteronomy 8:3? How does this relate to Jesus words here?

Deuteronomy 8:3 *He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*

See v34. The words of Jesus are food.

Carson: *“Jesus came to do the Father’s will (5:36; 6:38), and always did no less (8:29). His works were the works of God (9:3–4; 10:25, 32, 37-38; 14:10; 17:4). No-one has ever exemplified the truth of Deuteronomy 8:3 in anything like the degree Jesus has: man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. The creative will of God, realized in obedience, sustains life’ (Barrett, p. 241). If in his dealings with the Samaritan woman Jesus was performing his Father’s will, there was greater sustenance and satisfaction in that than in any food the disciples could offer him.”*

3. What is the harvest Jesus is talking about?

The people ready to brought into the Kingdom of God.

Carson: *“On any view, Jesus at this juncture is simply pointing out that by ordinary reckoning (Do you not say...?) there are four months remaining until harvest, but in the salvation-historical plane the harvest has already begun. He himself is engaged in that harvest; that is part and parcel of the work the Father gave him to do (v. 34). On this reading, the gap between sowing and harvest has not yet been introduced (cf. vv. 36-38).”*

4. Look back at John 1:1-4:42. What have we learned about Jesus?

For discussion.

The headings of the studies give some of my ideas.

Apply

1. Note what the woman does and says in this passage. How is this an example to us?

For Discussion

Look back at the passage.

This woman’s progress to belief and her witness of simply what Jesus had done for her are worth considering.

I love this - Barnett: *“The topographical, historical and cultural detail is so precise as to give it all the marks of a true story. There was such a woman, and though long since dead, we expect to meet her one day.”*

2. How do we view the ‘crop’ in Kiama?

Discuss.

You may be offended to think of your friends and neighbours as a ‘crop’ ripe for the picking.

But the truth is that God has prepared people in Kiama to belong to him and we (and other Christians) have the task of bringing them in.

Wright: *“When were you last so excited about something that you didn’t need to eat? For that matter when were you last looking with eyes of Jesus, at the harvest waiting to be gathered? Might those two questions perhaps have anything to do with each other?”*

Carson: *“Whatever the precise referents, no Christian ‘harvester’ can ever justly forget that (1) success in reaping normally depends on the work of those who have gone before; and that (2) in those rare instances where sowing and reaping seem to go hand in hand, it is but the foretaste of the eschatological blessings still to come.”*

For Next Week: Read John 4:43 on.