

Introduction:

- The 4th gospel differs in tone, literary style, and storyline from the other 3 gospels—the synoptic gospels. It possesses at times a different cast of characters.
- The way in which it tells of Jesus is unlike what is found in those gospels.
- It has often been described as ‘the spiritual’ gospel;
- It is also a story of growing conflict, of differing choices about how to understand Jesus and his self-sacrifice in the name of the love for all humanity.

Structure

- 1:1-18: Prologue
- 1:19-12:50 The Book of Signs
- 13:1-20:31 The Book of Glory
- 21 Epilogue

Things to notice:

- The life of Jesus does not unfold in a single year. Jesus is seen returning to Jerusalem on a number of times. The way they punctuate the story is a feature of John’s gospel. The geographical focus is on the Temple and Jewish religious festivals / calendar.
- There are a number of distinctive theological viewpoints:
 - The contrast between light and dark.
 - The separation of heaven from earth
 - Strong opposition of the Jews
 - Jesus’ origins and return to heaven/ the idea of being ‘sent’ by God.
- The gospel is like a cosmic court case between those who believe Jesus and those who reject him. There is much emphasis on testimony and witness.

Background:

- It is difficult to determine the who, where and when. It is believed to be the 4th of the gospels to be written, possibly between 90-110AD.
- The writer of the gospel sets out his purpose: “Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name “ [John 20:30-31]. The comparison can be made with the prologue to Luke.
- Sometimes said it was written for a community called ‘the Johannine circle’; it would seem as if they were a group that was in a considerable degree of tension with a larger surrounding Jewish group.

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Chapters 1-5.

The Prologue:

The Word Became Flesh

- **1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being **4** in him was life,^[a] and the life was the light of all people. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
- **6** There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. **8** He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. **9** The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.^[b] **10** He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. **11** He came to what was his own,^[c] and his own people did not accept him. **12** But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, **13** who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son,^[d] full of grace and truth. **15** (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") **16** From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. **17** The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son,^[e] who is close to the Father's heart,^[f] who has made him known.

Exercise 1:

Part 1:

1. How does the beginning of John (1:1-18) differ from how the other three gospels begin?
2. Compare John 1:1-5 with Genesis 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17.

What is distinctive about the claims John is making about Jesus?

Part 2.

3. What role does John play in the prologue? How does it differ from what we see in the other three gospels?
4. How do 'all' become 'the children of God'?

Notice the types of response to 'him'. Notice how there is no call to follow in the prologue.

Part 3.

5. How many titles and metaphors to do with 'him' can you identify?
6. How do you think we should interpret the phrase, 'the Word made flesh'?

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- **Beginnings:**

- John does not begin with the birth of Jesus as does Matthew and Luke: nor does he begin with the initial ministry as does Mark.
- John begins with a theological prologue;
- The author is signalling his purpose. The gospel is to be a reflection on the importance of Jesus and not just an account of his life.
- Jesus possesses no name in the prologue.
- Jesus is set outside time and human experience; he has a cosmic and eternal significance.
- The prologue anticipates a number of major themes that echo throughout the gospel:
 - the unique relationship of Jesus with God;
 - the sharp division between those who believe and those who do not;
 - the emphasis on the glory (rather than the suffering) of Jesus;
 - the importance of the incarnation;
 - the rejection of Jesus and the special role that testimony and evidence play in the argument.
- The prologue is clear that Jesus was not just a prophet or a saviour: he was the very incarnation of God; he is the active power of God; he is involved in creating the world and bringing life; while Jesus was in human form he is God
- The language of the Logos, the Word, is used in the prologue; there are many subsequent 'I am' sayings in this gospel—but there is no reference to 'I am the Word' / 'I am the Logos'.

- **The structure of the prologue:**

- The prologue can be divided up in three main claims.
 - The Word is God's creative and life-giving activity. (1-5)
 - The Word is the Incarnation; (9-13)
 - The critical importance of the role of belief in the Word. (14-18).

- **Comments:**

- The first unit begins outside; it echoes the beginning of Genesis; in Genesis God speaks the world into being; John refers to the Word the Logos as being the agent of all creation.

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- John the Baptist is introduced simply as John; his is identified as a *witness* to the light; he is not the light himself.
- This reference to John brings into play the historical situation of Jesus.
- It is evident that the themes of the prologue develop in successive waves; it anticipates the passion narrative;
- It is evident that the writer is drawing upon pre-existing ideas most notably the word there are numerous instances in the Old Testament where God speaks, there is also the word spoken to the prophet—that oracle is called the word of the Lord and sometimes the law (the Torah) is described as the word; in classical Stoic thinking the logos is the underlying quality that unites God with humans in the created order. In John's Gospel the word is capitalised as a divine presence not something independently present in the world; the word is uniquely applied to Jesus who is God's only son
- Is the author then using stoic material or simply turn into the western traditions of Israel their wisdom is present at the dawn of creation?

John 1:19-34

The Testimony of John the Baptist

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."^[a] ²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." ²²Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah,^[b] nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." ²⁸This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The Lamb of God

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ³¹I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."^[c]

Exercise 2:

7. How does this account of John differ with what you know of John the Baptist in the other gospels?

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8. What is the relationship (as depicted in this gospel) between John and Jesus?

Comments:

- We have already discovered that John is a witness: now there is a concern for his identity: 'Who are you? This question is not raised in the other gospels.
- Here it is the Jews who raise the question; they do so via the priest and Levites. Notice the question comes from the Temple rather than scribes and Pharisees.
- John is not the Messiah: he is defined initially by means of a three-fold negation. Nor is he Elijah – nor is he a prophet. Once the negations have passed the question becomes who sent you. The familiar passage from Isaiah 40 (found in the other gospels) comes in response to the question of sending.
- John defines himself by the quotation from Isaiah. IN the other gospels there is no corresponding question as to why John is baptizing along the lines of by what authority.
- John defines himself over and against by means of his baptizing with water and a sense of being inferior - the one who comes after him is mightier; in the gospel of Luke the relationship between Jesus and John is determined while both are in the womb. he will baptise with the Holy Spirit.
- John's witness is a confession: there is no baptism of Jesus, no rising from the waters and a voice from heaven.
- 'Here is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'.
How are we to understand this 'lamb'? is it the Passover lamb? the suffering servant of Isaiah 53?
- In terms of witness and evidence John declares that Jesus is the Son of God. This confession echoes the claim in the prologue that he is the only Son of the Father (1:14,18). John declares that the Son was 'before him' – in other words, before creation as per the prologue.
- John is able to make this claim because he saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and remaining on Jesus. In the other gospels we are told that John's baptism was for the sake of repentance; here John says the purpose of his baptismal ministry was to 'reveal' 'him' 'to Israel'.

The First Disciples of Jesus

³⁵The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" ³⁹He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed^[1]). ⁴²He brought Simon^[2] to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter^[3]).

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Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, ^[m] you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Exercise 3:

9. How does this account of the calling of the first disciples compare with what you know of the call to follow in the other gospels?

10. What titles do the disciples assign to Jesus?

- **Comment**

- These disciples are initially taken from the disciples of John the Baptist. Because of John's witness to the Lamb of God Andrew confesses that Jesus is the Messiah and brings his brother Simon to Jesus as well. The first disciple now knows who Jesus is, compared with the secrecy to be found in Mark and the ambiguous response to Jesus' query to the disciples as to who he is.
- There are no brothers fishing and being told to leave their nets; there is no talk of them being sent to become 'fishers of men [sic]'. Simon now acquires the name Cephas or Peter (the rock) rather than later when he replies to Jesus' question, 'who do you say that I am?'
- The calling of the first disciples includes names not mentioned in the other gospels at this point—Philip and Nathanael. Each one of them calls Jesus by a different name: the evidence is now mounting through disciples.
- Is there a little bit of rivalry between Bethsaida and Nazareth?
- There are many titles and metaphors used in this first chapter

The Word, the life, the light;
 Son of the Father; the Son of God; the Elect of God;
 Christ; Messiah: king of Israel: Rabbi;
 The Lamb of God; the Son of Man.

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John 2: 1-12**The Wedding at Cana**

2 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. **2** Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. **3** When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." **4** And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." **5** His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." **6** Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. **7** Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. **8** He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. **9** When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom **10** and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." **11** Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days.

Exercise 4:**11. Why do you think this wedding scene is recorded in John? What is its significance for the whole gospel?**

- **Comment:**
 - Jesus travels northwards to Galilee; the next sequence begins in Cana (at John 21:2 we discover that Nathanael was from Cana). It is not clear why it is the third day. It is doubtful whether that refers to the resurrection; it is doubtful whether it refers to the actual three days that it would take for a journey from Jerusalem to Galilee; maybe it is just a short period of time.
 - The disciples are invited to the wedding; the focus is on their reaction. The wedding is the setting for the first sign: weddings were often seen as signs of the coming messianic age; (Hosea 2:19-20; Isaiah 25:6-8 and Jeremiah 2:2). Note how Jesus says, "My hour has not yet come".
 - John's gospel never identifies Jesus' mother as Mary; she is only present in this gospel in this first sign and again later at the foot of the cross; there is no birth narrative; she does not come with Jesus' brothers to seek him out; she is always in the company of the disciples.
 - The role of his mother in this narrative is more ambiguous than that of the disciples. Jesus calls her 'woman'. His response to her saying the wine has run out is formal and a little bit blunt: "What concern is that to you and to me?" (2:4) It is a bit like why you are bothering me with this.
 - The focus of the exchange is Jesus' willingness to perform a sign—"the first of his signs". A sign is an act that points beyond what takes place to something else., something more significant. With this sign "Jesus revealed his glory". The

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word glory or splendour is used extensively in John. Implicit is the idea of the intensity of God's presence.

- The disciples believe in him. That is the proper response to a sign. Note there is no reference to his mother 'believing' in him on account of this sign.

John 2: 13-25

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

¹³The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

²³When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

Exercise 5:

12. Why do you think John sets the 'cleansing' of the Temple at the beginning of the gospel rather than in Jesus' last days (as was the case in the other gospels)?

13. What line of connection can you see between this event and the wedding at Cana story?

- **Comment:**

- This cleansing of the Temple comes early in this gospel. In the other gospels it occurs in the last days of Jesus; like the other gospels it is Passover week; John seems to know of Jesus going to Jerusalem many times; the Passover was one of three holy feasts – Passover, Tabernacles, and Weeks.
- The action suggests a prophetic act. It anticipates the destruction of the Temple and the driving of the people out of the Temple that will occur later. Jesus is disrupting the sacrificial system based on the Temple.
- Jesus is disrupting the activity that supported the Temple worship (not really cleansing). That is born out by the prediction that that the Temple will be destroyed and Jesus will rebuild it in 3 days. It is anticipating the way in which God's new act in Christ will replace the focus of faith on the Temple. It is a sign.

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- The Jews: it is clear that not all Jews oppose Jesus. Does the word here refer to those who oppose Jesus? Those who will not consider him to be the Messiah? It is not specified here that they are priests or scribes etc.

John 3:1-21

Nicodemus Visits Jesus

3 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus^[a] by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” ³Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”^[b] ⁴Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.^[c] ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You^[d] must be born from above.’^[e] ⁸The wind^[f] blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” ⁹Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you^[g] do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.^[h] ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.^[i]

¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”^[j]

Exercise 6:

14. Why do you think Nicodemus came to see Jesus?

15. In what ways does Jesus ‘testimony’ to Nicodemus mirror what is said in the prologue of John’s gospel?

16. How should John 3:16-21 be applied in our ‘world’ today?

- **Comment:**

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- Nicodemus appears only in this gospel and does so 3 times; he will appear again at 7:45-52 when the Temple people attempt to arrest Jesus; and finally at the tomb after Jesus is dead (19:39). There are no references to him in any of the other gospels.
- Who is he? He is a Pharisee (this is the first time a Pharisee is mentioned in this gospel); he is a 'teacher of Israel'; he is a leading member of the Jewish Council; thus he will participate in the council that has Jesus arrested and killed; on the other hand he is somewhat open to Jesus in the dialogue and with the dispute with the Pharisees. It is too much to call him a secret disciple; this story suggests some Jewish leaders more open to Jesus;
- Nicodemus comes by night. Is he afraid of the reaction of the other Jews; should we see this night-time visitation in the light of the prologue: Jesus is the light of the world but the world preferred darkness.
- How does Nicodemus function as a witness? He calls Jesus a 'Rabbi'; he is prepared to see Jesus as a special emissary of God; he recognizes that the signs Jesus performs must come from God; and yet he also fails to understand;
- How are we to understand that he must be born *anōthen* – again, or from above? It should be read in the light of the prologue – 'born from above' would then make more sense.
- This birth is tied to being baptized by water and the Spirit (as per prologue); the Spirit is playing a role in this gospel that it does not in the others: in Luke the spirit is frequently leading Jesus or upon him; here it is the Spirit blowing where it wills like the wind; it is much more bound up with the 'birth' of the one who 'believes' Jesus and 'sees' and 'enters' the kingdom of God.
- Jesus makes an extensive explanatory response to Nicodemus. It is a 'testimony': he explains his mission / ministry / purpose to this 'teacher of Israel' who does not 'understand these things' rather than to his disciples.
- Jesus invokes Moses in support; he makes reference to the Son of Man ascending and descending to / from heaven; He is God's 'only Son'; the world is 'saved through him' and thus belief in his name shows God's love.

John 3:22-36

Jesus and John the Baptist

²² After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized. ²³ John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim because water was abundant there; and people kept coming and were being baptized ²⁴ —John, of course, had not yet been thrown into prison.

²⁵ Now a discussion about purification arose between John's disciples and a Jew.^[k] ²⁶ They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing, and all are going to him." ²⁷ John answered, "No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Messiah,^[l] but I have been sent ahead of him.' ²⁹ He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly

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at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease."^[m]

The One Who Comes from Heaven

³¹ The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things. The one who comes from heaven is above all. ³² He testifies to what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his testimony. ³³ Whoever has accepted his testimony has certified^[m] this, that God is true. ³⁴ He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands. ³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath.

Exercise 7:

17. What does Jesus do in his ministry here (in John) that is not recorded in the other gospels ?

- **Comment:**
 - Jesus practised a ministry of baptism in Judea at the same time as John the Baptist this simultaneous baptizing movement is never reported and in the synoptic gospels; But see 4:1-3. The disciples were baptizing.
 - It seems as if some of Jesus' disciples were from John; they may have had a similar kind of ministry which could have led to some kind of confusion. There may then be a need to clarify the relationship.
 - And so John will testify that: i) he's not the Messiah; ii). his own ministry must diminish in order to allow Jesus ministry to grow. Only here in all the gospels with John describe himself as 'the friend of the bridegroom'.
 - John testifies 'to the one who comes from heaven who is above all'.

John 4:1-3

Jesus baptizing

4 Now when Jesus^[a] learned that the Pharisees had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John"²—although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized—³ he left Judea and started back to Galilee.

John 4:4-42

Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

⁴ But he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)^[b] ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where

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do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" ¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you ^[c] say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I am he, ^[d] the one who is speaking to you."

²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" ²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, ^[e] can he?" ³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." ³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. ³⁶ The reaper is already receiving ^[f] wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour."

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world."

Exercise 8:

19. If you were preaching a sermon on the story of the woman at the well, what would be your message? your focus?

- **Comment:**

- The story of the Samaritan woman is only found in John; it is noon; the setting is Jacob's well at Sychar. Jesus is tired. Jesus is on his own—the disciples are buying food in the city. When they return they will be astonished that Jesus is

[Type here]

talking the woman; they are also perplexed because Jesus refers to have some food “that you do not know about” to eat.

- It is a common practice for preachers to fasten in upon it being on and the woman’s history of five husbands; that is not the focus of the gospel writer’s account.
- The account shows Jesus dealing with a non-Jew; the exchange works on a play of words and a double meaning similar to what we saw in the Nicodemus’ story;
- Jesus initial response makes use of a double meaning of the term ‘living water’; that was the usual term for running water. The water that flowed from streams of springs was valued more than water from wells and cisterns; Jewish purification rites were valued as more effective if they were done with living water;
- The Samaritan woman’s response is the expected response but it shows a failure to understand the real issue at stake. Jesus is referring metaphorically to water that gives life and this is not really water at all. The reference to living water is somewhat similar to the term of being born from above made to Nicodemus;
- The woman acknowledges the prophetic nature of Jesus’ speech; she then proceeds to test Jesus within the context of the Jewish-Samaritan relationship / suspicion. There is a deep antipathy between Jews and Samaritans.
- Jesus is not preferring the Jewish worship practice over the Samaritan; he notes that both practices are transitory; they will be superseded by worship that is in spirit and in truth.
- Jesus replies “I am he the one who is speaking to you”; the comparison can be made with John the Baptist saying “I am not the messiah”. The woman still does not really understand Jesus:
- Through her testimony many Samaritans come to believe in Jesus. They move from wondering whether he is the Messiah “can he?” to being ‘the Saviour of the world’. Many more then “believed” because of ‘his word’: Jesus remained at Sychar for 2 days.
- Jesus is showing that God’s plan extends beyond the narrow confines of Judaism—even to the Samaritans and, by extension, to the Gentiles.

John 4:43-45

Jesus Returns to Galilee

⁴³When the two days were over, he went from that place to Galilee ⁴⁴(for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honour in the prophet’s own country). ⁴⁵When he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the festival; for they too had gone to the festival.

John 4:46-54

Jesus Heals an Official’s Son

⁴⁶Then he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had changed the water into wine. Now there was a royal official whose son lay ill in Capernaum. ⁴⁷When he heard that Jesus had

come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to him, “Unless you ^[a] see signs and wonders you will not believe.” ⁴⁹ The official said to him, “Sir, come down before my little boy dies.” ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, “Go; your son will live.” The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way. ⁵¹ As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive. ⁵² So he asked them the hour when he began to recover, and they said to him, “Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him.” ⁵³ The father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he himself believed, along with his whole household. ⁵⁴ Now this was the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee.

- **Comment:**

- This story is very similar to the one found in Matthew and Luke. Here it becomes another sign of Jesus’ nature. It demonstrates a positive response. It looks back to Cana by means of two explicit references—Cana as the location of the present action; it closes with a comment that this is the second sign Jesus performed after coming to Galilee.
- Verse 44 is a problem: a prophet has no honour in his own country. Jesus is leaving Samaria from Galilee: what does this reference to country mean? Is it supposed to refer to Samaria, to Judea, but what about Jesus as a Galilean? Then Jesus is immediately welcomed by the Galileans upon his arrival (4:45) Is it the people of Israel, especially Jerusalem and the Temple?
- The sign differs from the synoptic gospels; the man is identified as a royal official; the sick person is his son. The storyline is anticipated by Jesus’ initial response: 4:48 ‘Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe’.

John 5:1-18.

Jesus heals on the Sabbath:

5 After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.² Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew ^[a] Beth-zatha, ^[b] which has five porticoes. ³ In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. ^[c] ⁵ One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” ⁷ The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.” ⁸ Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” ⁹ At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. ¹⁰ So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” ¹¹ But he answered them, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” ¹² They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take it up and walk?’” ¹³ Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in ^[d] the crowd that was there. ¹⁴ Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.” ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. ¹⁶ Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.” ¹⁸ For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was

not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

- **Comment:**

- Jesus returns to Jerusalem for a festival of the Jews; once again we have a miraculous sign. This time it is a healing of a paralytic; he seeks a cure at the sheep pool. Jesus enquires whether the man wishes to be healed, he commands him to pick up his mat and walk. It is similar to Mark 2:11 Matthew 9:7 Luke 5:24 although the circumstances and settings are quite different.
- The focus of the story is not on the healing itself but on the controversy; the healing was on the sabbath the Jews accuse Jesus of doing work on the sabbath. Jesus responds: my father is still working and I am also working (5:17). This response hardens the Jews and the opposition to Jesus grows—such that they seek to kill him.
- The basis for the opposition is threefold: i). Jesus was breaking the sabbath; ii). Jesus was calling God his own father; iii). three Jesus was thus making himself equal to God.
- This opposition is not just due to a lack of insight and understanding; it was their duty to protect the Sabbath as duty under law given by God. Sabbath breaking is a serious offence.

John 5:19-47

The authority of other witnesses to Jesus 5:19-47.

¹⁹ Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father^[e] does, the Son does likewise. ²⁰The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. ²¹Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. ²²The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³so that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. Anyone who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.

²⁵ “Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; ²⁷ and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

³⁰ “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

³¹ “If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. ³² There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true. ³³ You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. ³⁴ Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵ He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a

while in his light. ³⁶ But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, ³⁸ and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.

³⁹ "You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. ⁴⁰ Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. ⁴¹ I do not accept glory from human beings. ⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? ⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?"

Exercise 9:

20. What claims is Jesus making on behalf of the Son?

21. Which witnesses does Jesus cite?

- **Comment:**
 - Jesus defends himself in a monologue: there is no response to his monologue. Opposition to Jesus grows. There is no report of anyone believing Jesus as a result of this speech. Jesus responses relies on 3 bold claims:
 - i) the Son is sent from the Father and that his work is directly related to the Father's work and so he receives its authority and power in God;
 - ii). the Son has received the authority to execute judgement
 - iii). there is ample testimony to who Jesus is and the failure to acknowledge that reality is not a failure of information but a spiritual failure.
 - Jesus is defending himself against the charge of blasphemy. In a trial it is common to call witnesses for defence. Jesus does that by calling 3 kinds of witness:
 - the testimony of John the Baptist who was acknowledged as upright and prophetic;
 - the very works or signs God has given Jesus to do; the signs are God's own testimony on behalf of John (5:37).
 - Jesus calls on scriptures -Jesus actually calls Moses as a witness against the prosecution. The activity of God among the Israelites has laid the groundwork. The failure to acknowledge Jesus is a failure to acknowledge this ancient testimony.