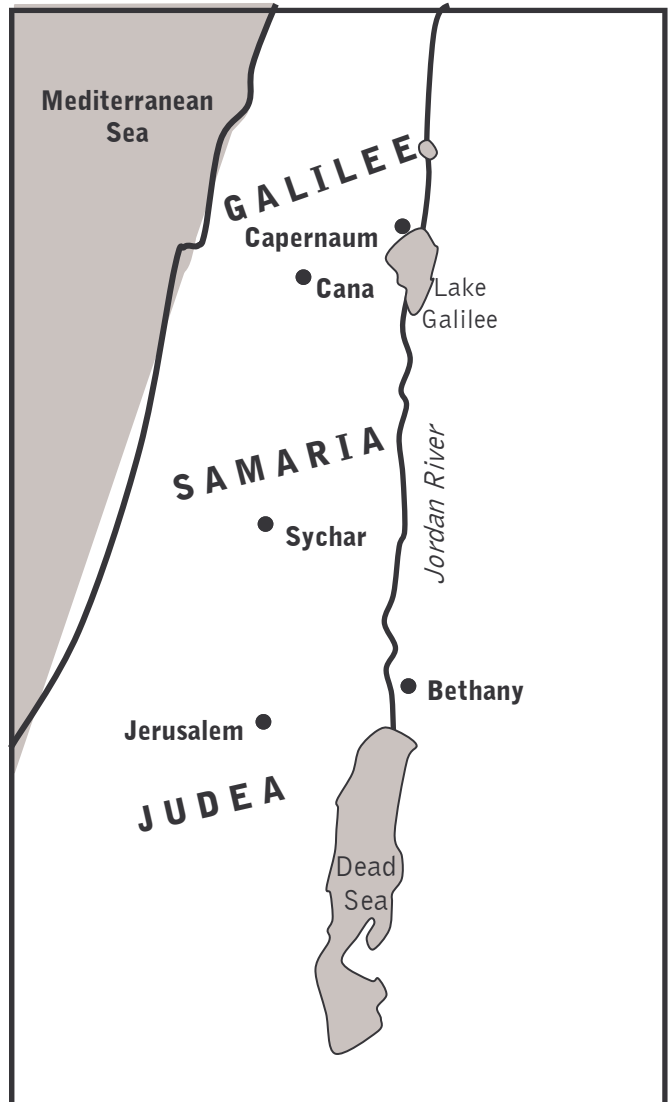




John 1-4: In Review

Next week, we're going to commence a new series looking at John 5-11, 'Life to the Full'. But before we get there, it's worth pressing the rewind button to see where we've come from. We looked at John 1-4 quite a few weeks ago now, so let's briefly go over these chapters to see what went on.

Flicking through your bible, mark arrows on the map to show the movement of Jesus as recorded in 1:28-4:54. For each location write down a summary phrase to describe what's going on there:



As you can see, Jesus is constantly moving between the Galilean region in the north and the Judean region in the south, and he's doing some pretty amazing things along the way! We'll come back to those things in a moment, but we have skipped John's introduction (v1-18) which in so many ways serves as an introduction and explanation of everything that happens afterwards.

Read John 1:1-18

Whenever we read this passage we're confronted with some poetic and symbolic language. It can be a bit hard to get into! But if you had to focus on what this passage says about what was Jesus' mission in life, what would you say?

From your knowledge of the Jews, what would they have been offensive to them, from v12-13?

The Jews weren't just any people. They were God's own special people and in their history they could look back and be proud of so much. Just have a look at their pedigree:

- Their great ancestor was Abraham, the one whom God had given special promises of blessing for the nation that would come from his descendents, and
- God has miraculously rescued that nation, the Jews from captivity in Egypt, and
- God had given the Jewish people his law at Mt Sinai, and
- God had jealously protected and provided for them while traveling through the wilderness, and
- They were given the promised land, God's own top class real estate, and finally
- In the land the Jews built the temple, the place where God promised to dwell amongst his people.

When you look at it like that, they had been privileged to receive so much. They had a great heritage and it's not without reason that they considered themselves to be God's people. But then..... along comes this Jesus! And here in John's 'prologue', Jesus is explained as *the* one who determines whether a person is a child of God or not. It's like the Jews can't rely on their pedigree anymore, it all depends upon this one person Jesus, and whether they will believe in him or not.

Let's have a quick look at the events of John 1-4 to see how the events point to the fact that the Jews just can't rely on their heritage anymore, but that Jesus now is the only one that counts.

Jesus at a Party (2:1-11)

Here we come again to that curious interaction between Jesus and his mother. Jesus is called on to top up the bar at a party, but he doesn't do it by way of going down to the local bottle-o. He does something much more amazing. What is it?

How is this miracle described? (in fact the miracles recorded by John are all described the same way eg. 2:23, 4:54, 6:2)



What do you think is meant by the word 'sign'?

John records certain miracles of Jesus, not simply because they show Jesus as an amazing wonder worker. They are signs, that is, they point to something. As we work our way through John, we'll see that his signs so often point to the reality of what Jesus came to do, his mission. When you look at this miracle of Jesus, how do you think it might point to what Jesus came to do. Hint: it has something to do with the water jars!

The Jews took a lot of care with their ceremonial cleanliness. They kept clean by eating this and not eating that. They kept clean by touching this and not touching that. And they kept clean by washing at the right time. It was all part of a system that kept the Jews distinct from the nations around them and showed that they belonged to God. But with this one act of turning the water into wine, how does Jesus show that he has come to overturn that system?

Jesus at the Temple (2:12-24)

Here's an event that's a great reminder that the real Jesus doesn't always match the stain-glass window version! Jesus is so angry with how the temple has been turned into a trade centre that he takes the time to make a whip to drive out the animals and scatter the tables of the money changers.

The Jews don't like this very bold act, so the people demand a sign of Jesus to prove his authority. With Jesus' reply, what's the misunderstanding that takes place?

What does Jesus say about what he has come to do?

How would you describe Jesus' attitude towards the temple?

Again, Jesus is showing that he has come to change things, and that to be in relationship with God it's all about Jesus. See, the physical building of the temple was a source of great pride for the Jews. It was the place where the people thought God, at least symbolically, dwelt. But Jesus is explaining that he is the real temple. He is the one where heaven and earth meet. In Jesus, God dwells with his people. Connected with this, in the original language of 1:14, it says, 'the Word became fleshed and *tabernacled* among us'. In other words, Jesus is the living breathing temple, the gateway to God. And this temple will be destroyed and raised again.

Jesus and a Jew (3:1-36)

From the description of Nicodemus in 3:1, what could we say about him?

Nicodemus was a zealous man for God. He was a Pharisee which meant he was part of that religious party who highly valued the scriptures and desired to keep God's laws. Because he was a member of the Jewish ruling council (called the *Sanhedrin*) he would have been well respected and valued for his wisdom and knowledge.

What does Jesus say that is so shocking to Nic?

It's not that he should have been surprised, but it's like Nicodemus and so many of his time had forgotten the promise of God in Ezekiel 36:25-27. This prophecy spoke of the day when God would pour out his Spirit to wash the people clean and give them the power to start afresh and live with a new heart for Him. Jesus is trying to teach this teacher the right way of thinking.

From 3:16-18, who are those who will be born again and have God's own Spirit dwelling with them?

Again Jesus is showing that he stands at the very centre of what it means to belong to God. God's Spirit must come and this being born again, happens for those who believe in Jesus. What a shocking thing it must have been for those Pharisees. Despite the law and all their studies and wisdom, without Jesus it will all come to naught.

Jesus and a Samaritan (4:1-42)

Here Jesus breaks a few conventions by speaking to a woman, but not only a woman, a woman of doubtful morality, and not only that, but also a Samaritan. In normal practice a Jewish man like Jesus and this woman would never mix. Samaritans were part of the scattered and smashed tribes of Israel in the past. They shared some of Israel's heritage and hope... though they had so intermingled with the people around them that they were treated with disdain by the Jews. Even so, the Samaritans had a religious ancestry they held dear. What is the heritage that this woman takes pride in? (v5,6,12,19).

Just as the Jews took pride in their ancestry (eg. Abraham) and a physical location (Jerusalem), so it was also for the Samaritans. These Samaritans, who were a mix race/religion people, saw one of their great ancestors as Jacob, and the land that was special to them, was the land once owned by Jacob. The history behind Jacob and the land that he possessed is found in passages like Gen 33:18-20; 48:22, though a well is never mentioned.

What's Jesus' great promise that he gives this woman? (John 7:37-39 can be helpful here)

In Jesus words to this woman, how does he downplay the significance of religious ancestry and physical location for both the Samaritans *and* the Jews?

Looking back over the events of chapter 1-4, what is the *Jews'* response to Jesus? Mark an X to give your rating. 1 = strong hate/opposition. 5 = neutral. 10 = belief and acceptance

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Looking at 4:39-42, what is the *Samaritans'* response to Jesus. Again, mark an X to give your rating.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Isn't this such a surprising thing! Over these chapters Jesus is giving clear signs that he is the one that the people must come to, to be a child of God. They can't rely on their religious background, their heritage. God doesn't care about that anymore—what matters is receiving and believing in Jesus (1:12-13). The Jews just don't seem to get it— but the Samaritans, those not even God's chosen people, come to Jesus openly. They know they've found the Saviour!

This rift between Jesus and the Jews will grow as we keep making our way through John. But spend time now praying. Give thanks for the way Jesus was revealing himself and especially pray that people around us, would come to know Jesus just as these Samaritans did. Pray for Open Church next Sunday.