

# Jesus' Home – John 1

A Bible Discussion by Robert Jackson

This is my favourite Bible Discussion. I stole all the ideas from chapter 1 of “Jesus among other gods” by Ravi Zacharias. It asks the question: “What place did Jesus call home?” The point is that Jesus’ home was heaven, and He wants to invite us there.

## Introduction

**Opening question:** What place do you call home? [I’ve led this study 4 or 5 times, and never ceased to be amazed by the great answers that this question can elicit!]

Open your bibles to John 1. Today we are going to learn what place Jesus called home. We are reading a passage which takes place about the time Jesus was beginning his public ministry.

## Part One

Get someone to **read John 1:35–40.**

**v35:** Who is this John? [John the Baptist.]

What was John’s message? [There are many answers: Repent. Give up your tunic. Don’t extort money... There is one particular answer we are looking for: “The Messiah has come; the Kingdom is near”; I’m sure someone will say it eventually.]

Was John’s message popular? [Yes, people flocked to him.]

Why? [The Jews had been waiting thousands of years for the Messiah to come, as prophesied in countless Old Testament passages. Every year they would pray for the Deliverer. And here was a Prophet, John, saying that the Messiah had come! I’ve never had trouble getting this answer to come out with a few leading questions.]

**v36:** What does it mean to call someone “The Lamb of God”? [There is no right answer. My opinion: Every day the Jews needed to sacrifice animals to God. I.e. They had to offer the lambs *of men up to God*. But Jesus reversed the process: He was a Lamb *from God* being offered *to men*.]

**v37:** People stopped following John and started following Jesus. Was that a good thing? [Absolutely! That was the whole point!]

**v38:** At this point the effectiveness of the Bible Discussion depends on you painting a dramatic picture: *Imagine, you are a first Century Jew who had been listening to a Prophet from God, saying that the Messiah had come to deliver Israel from oppression. For countless generations, your people had read about the Messiah in the Bible, and prayed for His coming. And now, He had come to save the world! And you actually got to meet Him – the Lamb of God Himself, and He asked you what you wanted. You could have asked for **anything** – from God in the flesh... What do they ask? [They ask where Jesus was staying. Some will answer straight away. Let it be a **huge** anti-climax! We are *supposed* to be shocked! Verse 38 is one of the weirdest verses in the Bible.]*

Why did they ask this? [There is a right answer, but don't tell anyone, just get people's opinions. If anyone gets it right, that's awesome, but I've never come across that.]

**Say:** When we read the Gospels, we need to remember that we are reading Middle Eastern books written for Middle Eastern readers. We are at a disadvantage here in Australia, because we are so culturally removed from Eastern culture. Here is a quote from an Indian author named Ravi Zacharias: "In the East, the home is the defining cultural indicator. Everything that determines who you are and what your future bodes is tied into your heritage and your social standing. Absolutely everything." (page 27 of "Jesus among other gods")

What are some of the differences between Eastern and Western culture? [Try to keep the discussion general, so as not to offend anyone. However, I've always been pleasantly surprised by how many people with Eastern backgrounds provide helpful anecdotes! Here is a list of some things which could come up. The last two are the crucial ones:

- ✚ Poor vs. wealthy: Many Eastern countries are third world. Jesus lived in poverty.
- ✚ *Intensely Religious vs. Secular:* Everyone, that means everyone, in Eastern culture is religious. Western society is far more secular.
- ✚ Long traditions and history vs. relatively new and developing culture.
- ✚ Superstitious vs. Scientific: (Like I say, try not to offend anyone! Do your best to get other people to talk about the differences – there are hundreds! Reread the Zacharias quote if things go stale, and then just ask what we can learn from that.)
- ✚ *Hospitality:* This is crucial. In Eastern culture, to invite someone into your home and eat with them was like treating someone as a family member – it means to invite them into your family and your life, almost. In the West, we just "have people 'round and order a pizza – no big deal!" There is a *huge* difference here. Anyone familiar with Indian or Middle Eastern culture will be aware of this.
- ✚ *Community vs. Individualism:* In the East, your family defines who you are. People live in extended families and continue the family line of work. People care more about your family than your credentials; more about your home city than your annual income. The West, of course, is a very individualistic society.]

**Reread v38–39**, slowly and passionately: What is going on these verses? [The answer should now be obvious: *The disciples have asked the most important question they could possibly have asked.* To know Jesus' home town, his roots, his community, was essential. Jesus avoids answering the question, but instead invites them into His house, and therefore into his family, his circle, his life. Jesus' invitation *is* His answer, and He shows amazing hospitality to these strangers.]

**Optional: v40:** What is the first thing Andrew does? [Invite his brother along. Again we see the centrality of family.]

## Part Two

**Have John 1:43–52 read out.** Here we see what happens the next day.

**v45:** How does Philip introduce Jesus? [He gives three important details: 1. He is the one written about in the Law and the Prophets. One of the key prophecies was that He would be the Son of David. This shows Jesus' *lineage*. 2. He is from Nazareth: Jesus' *home town*. 3. He is the son of Joseph, the carpenter: Jesus' *family*.]

Now ask a string of trick questions: What did Jesus do for a job? [We *don't know!* We only guess that He was a carpenter because His father was. We are never told Jesus' occupation.]

How big was Jesus' house? [Unknown.]

How much did Jesus earn a year? [No idea – we just know He was poor.]

How well educated was He? [Unknown – we don't even know if He was literate!]

**Say:** Everything that matters to us in the West (how much someone earns, what degree they have, how cool their house/apartment is...) we *don't know* about Jesus. Everything that matters in the East (your family, home town, lineage, your father) we know *in detail*. So, understanding the Eastern culture of the Gospels helps us in many ways.

Jesus left no home, no land, no tomb, no book... He left only a Message and the power of an indestructible life.

**v46:** And, just for good measure, what do we know about Jesus' town? [It was lowly, outcast, poor, looked down on. Hold that thought, it will be useful later on!]

**Reread v47–51:** Jesus seemed to know all about Nathaniel. What did Jesus know? [1. He knew his actions: that he had been standing under the fig tree. Don't ask me what Nathaniel was doing at the time, but he obviously knew no one was watching! 2. He knew his integrity: That in him was nothing false. We saw in v46 that Nathaniel speaks his mind!]

Why does Jesus reveal this? [It shows Jesus' authority; He has supernatural insight.]

Nathaniel makes a declaration of faith in v49. What is the basis of this declaration? [Just what we've said: Jesus' special insight into Nathaniel's actions and his character.]

Who is the Son of Man in **v51**? [Jesus Himself. No need for any elaboration!]

What is Jesus referring to in v51? [Jacob's dream at Bethel – see Genesis 28:12. You may as well ask, maybe someone will know! Someone has known the answer to this question about half the times that I've led this discussion. Anyway, if no one knows, just tell them: Jacob had a dream in which he saw God on a stairway to heaven, with the angels ascending and descending on Him. In v51, Jesus is saying that that was actually Him; Jesus is claiming to be divine!]

**Say:** In this passage, Jesus addressed His heavenly home. He made clear that He had come from down heaven, as the Lamb of God, at home with the angels. So, it's as if Jesus is finally getting around to answering the question from v38, which he evaded at first: His home is heaven – from the beginning, He was at home there. Why is this significant? [See what people say, then give a powerful answer to the question by delivering the conclusion.]

## Conclusion

Jesus' home is heaven (perhaps you could even read John 1:3–4), and that means that, from the start, Jesus had all power, and all knowledge. He invited people freely into His home when he was on earth; invited them to be a part of His family. He still wants to invite us into His home today, and this passage teaches us that when Jesus invites us into His home, he's inviting us to eternal life. Will you accept Jesus' offer to go into His home today?