

# Sermon Outline

“LIFE IN HIS NAME”:  
THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

---

## THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN, PART ONE: SOMETHING’S IN THE AIR

*JOHN 1:19-23*

### I. Old News, New News

### II. Lessons from the Prologue (John 1:1-18)

- A. For the past few weeks, we have been soaking in the Prologue to the Gospel of John.
- B. Why should we believe in Jesus of Nazareth? Because Jesus is...
  - 1. the Word of God
  - 2. the Son of God
  - 3. the Bringer of eternal life and light
  - 4. the Lord God himself.
- C. John makes his case about Jesus by linking him to God’s cosmic plans for the universe.
- D. But beginning in 1:19, we come back to earth, so to speak.  
—Having revealed that Jesus is himself God who comes to reveal God, John the Gospel writer now begins his account of the earthly ministry of Jesus. He begins with John the Baptist.

### III. Jerusalem: “Who Are You?” (John 1:19)

- A. The first mention of John the Baptist was back in 1:6, 7: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.”
- B. Verse 19 develops on the information we received in verses 6-8.
- C. The opening phrase—“And this is the testimony of John”—tells us what it is that we are reading here.
  - 1. Everything from verse 19 to verse 34 is John’s testimony when he was interviewed by priests and Levites from Jerusalem.
  - 2. This detail helps us to understand something of the gravity of what is going on here.

D. Who were the priests and the Levites?

1. When God gave his Law to Israel, he established the institution of the priesthood.
2. Priests functioned as mediators between Israel and the Lord.
3. Under this role, the priests did several things.
  - a. Priests offered sacrifices to the Lord in the temple.
    - Leviticus 21:6: Priests “offer the LORD’s food offerings, the bread of their God...”
  - b. Priests taught the Law of the Lord to their fellow Israelites.
    - Leviticus 10:10-11: “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, <sup>11</sup> and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses.”

E. The priests and Levites were the spiritual leaders of Israel.

#### IV. Concerning “the Jews”

- A. These priests and Levites did not come to John out of their own accord. They were sent by Jews from Jerusalem.
- B. In John’s Gospel, the Jews are often featured as the opponents of Jesus and his community (cf. Jn 5:10, 16, 18; 6:41, 52; 7:13, etc.).
- C. But John is *not* setting up a form of racial discrimination. He is not insinuating that being a Jew is bad or that Jewishness is sinful.
- D. From how he uses “Jews,” John seems to be using this term to refer specifically to those Jews who oppose Jesus and his community.  
—Many of whom would be associated with the religious and political establishment of Jerusalem.
- E. We could also read the negative connotations of “the Jews” in light of 1:11: “He came to *his own*, and *his own people* did not receive him.”
  1. “Jews” highlights the immense insult that the community of Israel has paid to their God and Lord.
  2. While many Jews will receive Jesus, most would not.
  3. John may be portraying the rejection of the Jews as a kind of betrayal.  
—While freedom from curse and exile has arrived in Jesus, the Jews would rather swear allegiance to a pagan ruler than to their rightful Savior Lord (cf. Jn 19:15).

- F. Lest we are tempted to only see Jews in a bad light, this is true for all people. —Jesus is the rightful Creator of every civilization in the world. He offers himself to be their Lord and Life. Yet they reject him.

## V. John: “I Am not the Christ” (John 1:20)

- A. In response to that question, John “confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, ‘I am not the Christ’” (v 20).
- B. John’s confession was in view of the fact that the priests and the Levites were trying to figure out if John saw himself in those terms. There must have been some talk amongst the religious leaders in Jerusalem that John saw himself as the Christ.

## VI. Further Questions, More Denials (John 1:21, 22)

- A. But then, the guys from Jerusalem are not satisfied with that answer. And in the questions that follow, we get a sense of what some Jews believed about the end times.

### B. *Elijah?*

1. If John was not the Christ, could he be Elijah (v 21)?
2. Why Elijah? According to one strain of Jewish belief, God would send Elijah back to Israel before he returns.
  - Malachi 4:5, 6: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup>And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”
3. John: “I am not.”

### C. *The Prophet?*

1. If John is neither the Christ nor Elijah, then could he be the Prophet?
  - Deuteronomy 18:15-22: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— <sup>16</sup>just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ <sup>17</sup>And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. <sup>18</sup>I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. <sup>19</sup>And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. <sup>20</sup>But the prophet who

presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’<sup>21</sup> And if you say in your heart, ‘How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?’—<sup>22</sup> when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.”

2. John: “No.”

D. “So they said to him, ‘Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’” (v 22).

## VII. John the Voice (John 1:23)

A. John: “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” (v 23).

B. John sees himself in light of Isaiah 40.

<sup>1</sup> Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,

and cry to her

that her warfare is ended,

that her iniquity is pardoned,

that she has received from the LORD’s hand

double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;

make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up,

and every mountain and hill be made low;

the uneven ground shall become level,

and the rough places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,

and all flesh shall see it together,

for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

C. The exile of Israel and of the world is nearing the end. The Lord God almighty is on his way. All flesh shall soon see, with their own eyes, his glory.

D. What is the nature of this glory? John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

## VIII. The Future Has Arrived

The great historical Event that should consume every believer's mind happened more than 2,000 years ago: *The LORD came back for his people as he had promised. He came back to end our exile and accomplish our salvation in the person of Jesus Christ.* Because he is God, the whole life of Jesus is the return of the Lord. Through Jesus' virgin birth, perfect obedience to the Law, ministry of teaching and healing, atoning sacrifice on the cross, burial in the grave, resurrection from the dead, ascension into heaven, and then his giving of the Holy Spirit to the Church on Pentecost, Isaiah 40 was being fulfilled. God himself was returning to his people, forgiving our sins, burying our sins in the depths of the grave, freeing us from enslavement to the cosmic powers of darkness, and forming his holy kingdom in our hearts. To find God's comfort, all eyes must look back to Jesus. All hearts must be set on him.

### A. Some implications

1. The way to grow spiritually is not to look for more miracles, but to focus on the One who has already come, the One who even now dwells in our hearts.
2. The way to true happiness is not to look for more things, but to look to the One who has already been given to us, the One who contains all of God's love for us.

B. If we are so consumed with the latest developments (or tragedies) in this world, we will end up missing what is truly new.  
—For the believer, the *new* has already arrived. It is concentrated in Jesus Christ.

C. All the life, goodness, and blessing that God desires to give his people is in Christ (cf. Eph 1:3).

D. The great need for believers is to go deeper into the glory of Jesus Christ, to allow our lives to be fitted into his, and molded around his; to allow his grand and holy life to be mapped onto ours.

E. *Will you find your future in Jesus Christ?* Will you find your destiny in Jesus, or will you continue clinging to things that are passing away? Will Jesus be your life, or will you cling to the dreams of this passing age? Go to Jesus. Receive Jesus as your life from God. And watch how he makes things new.

## Questions for Reflection

1. Based on John 1:1-18, why must we believe in Jesus?
2. Who were the priests and Levites? What role was given to them by the Law of Moses? And what impact does this have on their interview with John?
3. Who were the messianic figures that the priests asked if John was? What was the significance of each of these figures?
4. The Lord God has returned to his people in the person of Jesus. The most important Event in history (other than the completion of our salvation at Messiah's return) has happened. How should this affect the way we view present history? How should this affect how we evaluate things in this life?