

# Sermon Outline

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

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## THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN, PART TWO: HE HAS ARRIVED

*JOHN 1:19-23*

### I. Introduction

### II. Introducing the Pharisees (John 1:24)

- A. Verse 24 shows that the priests and Levites were “sent from the Pharisees.”
- B. The Pharisees were a reforming movement within the Judaism of Jesus’ day.
  - 1. The Pharisees were a movement of Torah scholars who were intensely interested in purifying the people of Israel. (N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*).
  - 2. The Pharisees were not...
    - a. the priesthood of Israel (though they had priests among their ranks).
    - b. just anyone who studied the Law of Moses.  
—While all the Pharisees were students of the Law, not all students of the Law would have identified themselves with that movement.
- C. As the Pharisees went about their work, teaching God’s Law, they...
  - 1. developed their own traditions on how to read and apply the Bible.
  - 2. formed their own patterns of prayer and forms of personal devotion.
  - 3. nurtured their own vision of how exactly Israel is to be saved. (Wright, *John for Everyone, Part Two*, 181).  
—According to the Pharisaic view of salvation, Israel will attain justification in the sight of God when Israel keeps the commandments of the Lord (cf. Phil 3:5, 9).

### III. The Question of Authority (John 1:25)

- A. We can see why the Pharisees took an interest in John.
  - 1. Like the Pharisees, John was taught a message of individual and national redemption and sanctification.
  - 2. If you were a Pharisee—and you were convinced that your way was the best for Israel!—then you would have wanted to know whether or not John the Baptist was on your side.

B. Having completed their initial list of questions, the priests and Levites now ask John the real question: “They asked him, ‘Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?’” (v 25).

—From the perspective of the Pharisees and priests, baptism—or least the kind of baptism that John was practicing—was not something just about anyone could do. (Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John 1-10*, 29). It was something only the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet could do.

C. Concerning baptism

1. Baptism is a symbolic washing of a person to make him or her holy.
2. In those days, baptism was performed by the priests on those entering the community of Israel for the first time—not on those who were already members of Israel.
3. By baptizing Israelites, John was suggesting that all Israelites need to be cleansed in order to be considered members of true Israel. Israel needs to be cleansed. Israel needs to be given new life.
4. It seems that this message offended two groups of Jews.
  - a. Those who believed that any Jew who is circumcised is already a true Israelite (cf. Mt 3:9; Lk 3:8).
  - b. Those (like the Levites in John 1) who believed that even if renewed repentance and baptism of Jews was necessary, the only ones who could do that were the Christ, Elijah, and/or the Prophet.
5. From the Pharisees’ perspective, it seems that only the Lord’s anointed one(s) could perform such a baptism on Israel.
6. One of the Scriptural bases for John’s baptism may be Ezekiel 36:25: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.”

#### IV. The One who Comes after John (John 1:26, 27)

A. John’s response to the Levites: “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know...” And who is this One? John says that this One is “he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”

B. In those days, it was the duty of slaves to untie the sandal straps of their masters.

—By saying that he’s not even worthy to untie the sandals of this One, what is John implying?

## V. The One Who Baptizes with the Holy Spirit and Fire (Luke 3:15-17)

A. To better understand who John means by “he who comes after me,” consider Luke 3:15-17.

<sup>15</sup> As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, <sup>16</sup> John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

B. The Holy Spirit and fire are salvation on the one hand and judgment on the other.

1. The salvation of Israel involves or begins with the *baptism of the Holy Spirit*, the washing with the Holy Spirit.

a. This is likely what is described in Ezekiel 36:25-27 (among other passages):

<sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

b. This is what salvation looks like.

—It looks like God washing away the sins of his people once for all and then sending his Holy Spirit upon his people.

2. But salvation will be accompanied (at some later date) by the *fire* of judgment.

Luke 3:17: “His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

C. Summary: The Master will do a two-fold work.

1. *Salvation*: He will wash/baptize the believing and repentant with the Holy Spirit and gather them into God’s barn/household.

2. *Judgment*: Those who refuse God’s forgiveness through unbelief and unrepentance will come under the fierce heat of divine judgment.

D. Who is this One who comes after John?

1. He is the Messiah.

2. Even more: He is the One of Isaiah 40. He is the Lord YHWH, the eternal Power, the God of gods, Lord of lords, Emperor of emperors, and heavenly King of glory.

<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.

E. Are we sensing the gravity of John’s words yet?

## VI. Repentance and Renewal

**If the LORD God has come for his people as he had promised, what does this mean for us? It means that life will never be the same again. It means that our center of gravity as a race has completely, utterly, and forever shifted—and things cannot go back to what they used to be anymore. God has come to be the sun around which our galaxies revolve. He has come to be our Heaven on earth. He has come to be our King, our Center, our Context, our Meaning, our Life. He has come to renew the world.**

A. Too often, we domesticate God and his Gospel.

1. We reduce God to our Helper, Personal Administrative Assistant, or Best Supporting Cast.
2. God does want us to come to him for all our needs and cares.
3. Our God is the God who...
  - gave us the Song of Solomon (a celebration of romantic love) and Proverbs (wisdom for daily life).
  - instructs us to pray for our daily bread and necessities of life (Mt 6:11).
  - cares for everything from falling hair to unemployment (cf. Mt 10:30; 2 Thess 3:10).
4. Yet, he is infinitely so much more than that!

B. The Gospel that we preach is not merely therapeutic news. The Gospel is a royal announcement/proclamation that demands the response of every single human being in the world.

C. If the LORD has come to save his people, then we must *repent*.

1. To repent is to change our minds and begin seeing/valuing things as God does.

2. Now that the Lord has arrived in Jesus Christ, we must change our minds about...
  - who we are and our role in this world
  - what is right and wrong
  - our direction in life
  - what we deem to be of utmost importance
  - who has the first and last Word in our lives
  
3. The Lord has not come to be your Sidekick, Personal Administrative Assistant, or Best Supporting Actor. He has come to be your King—
  - Potentate,
  - Ruler,
  - First Love,
  - Honey from the rock,
  - Intoxication,
  - Pillar of cloud by day and fire by night,
  - Beginning and End
  - the All-in-all of your very existence
  - and we must receive him as he is.
  
4. We are no longer to be the center of our lives.
  - a. The “I” that we guard so obsessively must now be dethroned.
  - b. Where it once stood must now stand the Lord of heaven and earth. That is at the heart of repentance.
5. We are to repent from...
  - a. our sins
  - b. our watered-down notions of God’s kingdom and righteousness
  - c. our over-estimation of the things of this world
  
- D. Yet, that new, repentant, God-centered way of life is precisely what the Lord himself has come to create.
  1. While God calls his people to return to him, he is the One who mercifully causes them to do so.
    - Ezekiel 36:26-27: The Lord says, “And *I* will give you a new heart, and a new spirit *I* will put within you. And *I* will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And *I* will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”
  2. The Lord has come to establish his dominion in the world. But he does this by the life-renewing power of his Holy Spirit.

3. To whom is the Holy Spirit given? To those who despair of any hope in themselves and cast themselves onto the Lord Jesus Christ alone.
  - John 7:37-38: “On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.’<sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”<sup>39</sup> Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Who are the Pharisees? Why is it important for us to understand them better?
2. How should we respond to the arrival of the Lord?
3. What is repentance? What are we to repent from?
4. What are some ways we “domesticate” God and his Gospel? How do we water-down the claims of God’s dominion?
5. What kind of people has the Lord come to create?
6. How do we receive the gift of God’s Holy Spirit?