

The *Good News* that John Wrote

*...that you may believe that
Jesus is the Christ, the Son of
God, and that believing you
may have life in his name.*

John 20.31

Life in the Spirit

Prayer Before Reading Scripture

Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments, so that having conquered all sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the light of our souls and bodies, and to You we give glory together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all holy, good, and life giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Objectives of the Class

- To behold in our hearts the glory of Christ
- To participate more deeply in life in the Spirit
- To become more conformed to His image

Overview

John 1.19-28

Watch
John 1.19-28

Study

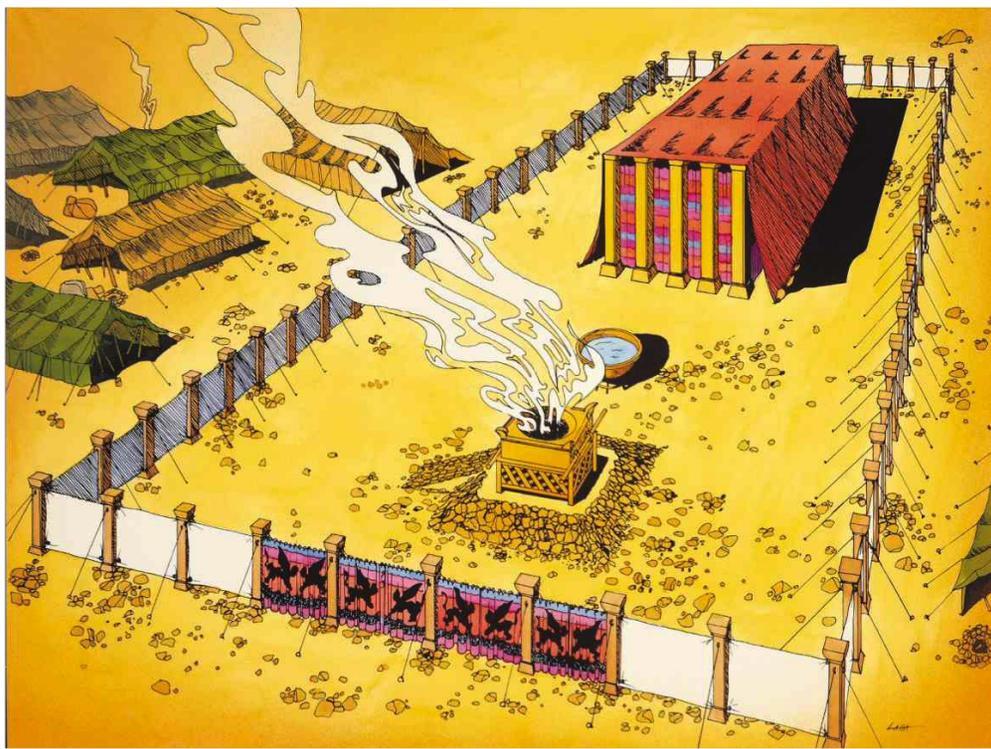
John 1.19-28

John 1.19: The Jewish authorities in Jerusalem sent some priests and Levites to John to ask him, “Who are you?” (GNB)

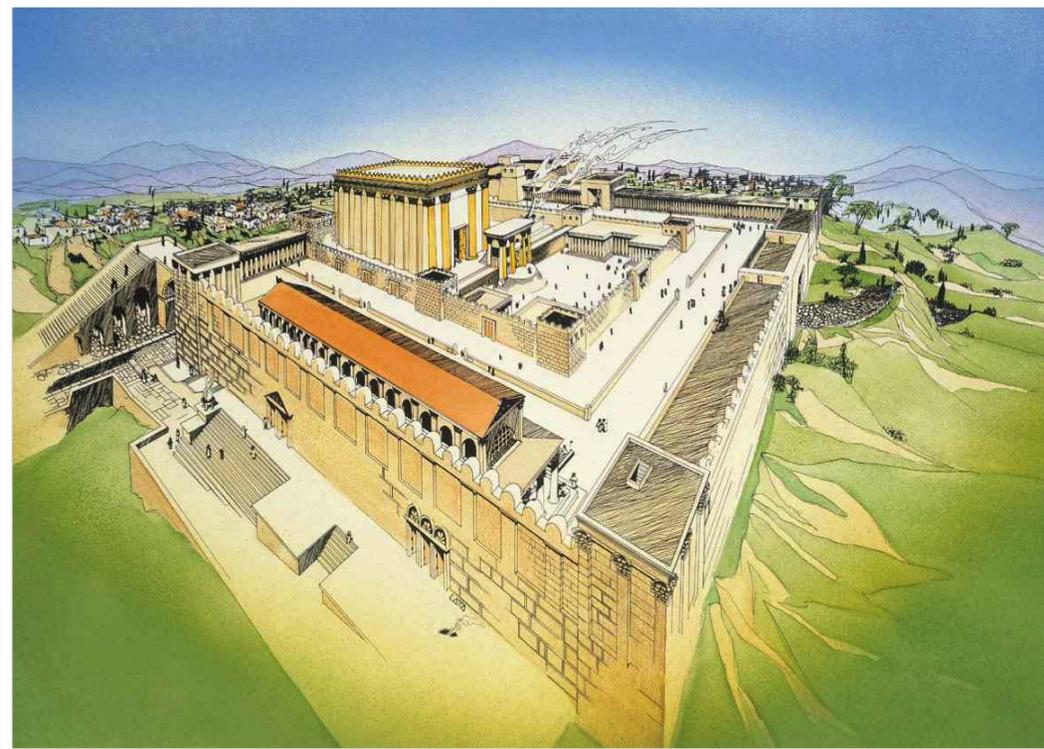
John 1.19: And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” (RSV)

- Where did John baptize people and why is the place significant?
- Why did they ask John, “Who are you?”
- Who are “the Jews”?
- Who are the “priests” and “Levites”?
- Why “from Jerusalem”?

Tabernacle in the Wilderness



Herod's Temple in Jerusalem



John 1.20: John did not refuse to answer, but spoke out openly and clearly, saying: “I am not the Messiah.” (GNB)

John 1.20: He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” (RSV)

- What does John’s name mean?
- Of what tribe was he?
- What does John’s answer reveal about his character?

John 1.21: “Who are you, then?” they asked. “Are you Elijah?” “No, I am not,” John answered. “Are you the Prophet?” they asked. “No,” he replied. (GNB)

John 1.21: And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” And he answered, “No.” (RSV)

- Why did they ask him if he was Elijah?
 - **Mal 4.5-6:** (God said:) “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.”
- Why did they ask him if he was “the prophet”?
 - **Deut 18.15:** (Moses said:) “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren—him you shall heed—”

John 1.22: “Then tell us who you are,” they said. “We have to take an answer back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” (GNB)

John 1.22: They said to him then, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” (RSV)

John 1.23: John answered by quoting the prophet Isaiah: “I am ‘the voice of someone shouting in the desert: Make a straight path for the Lord to travel!’” (GNB)

John 1.23: He said, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” (RSV)

- How does this show (again) the humility of John the Forerunner?
- How can we “make a straight path for the Lord”?:
 - **Mat 3.2-3:** “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” (spoken by John the Forerunner)
 - **Mat 4.17:** From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- Repentance prepares the heart for the Kingdom of God
- John baptized for forgiveness of sins those whose lives bore the fruit of repentance (Mat 3.7-8)

Repentance

The way to perfection is through the realization that we are blind, poor, and naked. This sense of nakedness is closely linked with contrition of the spirit, when in unceasing repentance we pour out before God our grief and sorrow at our impurity.

Penitent feelings are an essential element of true spiritual progress, and whoever evades them is deviating from the right way.

Repentance is the starting point and foundation stone of our new life in Christ; and it must be present not only at the beginning but throughout our growth in this life, increasing as we advance.

It is impossible to live at peace with God without continual repentance.

St. Theophan the Recluse, excerpt from *The Art of Prayer*.

The Kingdom of God
Our Father which art in heaven,
hallowed by Thy Name, **Thy kingdom come..**

- **Thy Kingdom come**—what does it mean?
 - We want you to be the boss over every area of our lives and over all people everywhere.
- **Thy Kingdom come**—when does it come?
 - **Future:** I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. Luk 22.18. “...the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.” Mat 16.27.
 - **Present:** Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,.’ because the kingdom of God is within you.” Luk 17.20-21.

The Kingdom of God

...the fortunate seeker receives what he has sought. He finds the heart and establishes himself in it with his mind before God, and stands before Him unswervingly like a faithful subject before the King, receiving from Him the power and strength to rule over all his inner and outer life, according to God's good pleasure. This is the moment when the kingdom of God enters within and begins to manifest itself in its natural strength.

St. Theophan the Recluse, excerpt from *The Art of Prayer*.

John 1.24-25: The messengers, who had been sent by the Pharisees, then asked John, “If you are not the Messiah nor Elijah nor the Prophet, why do you baptize?” (GNB)

John 1.24-25: Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” (RSV)

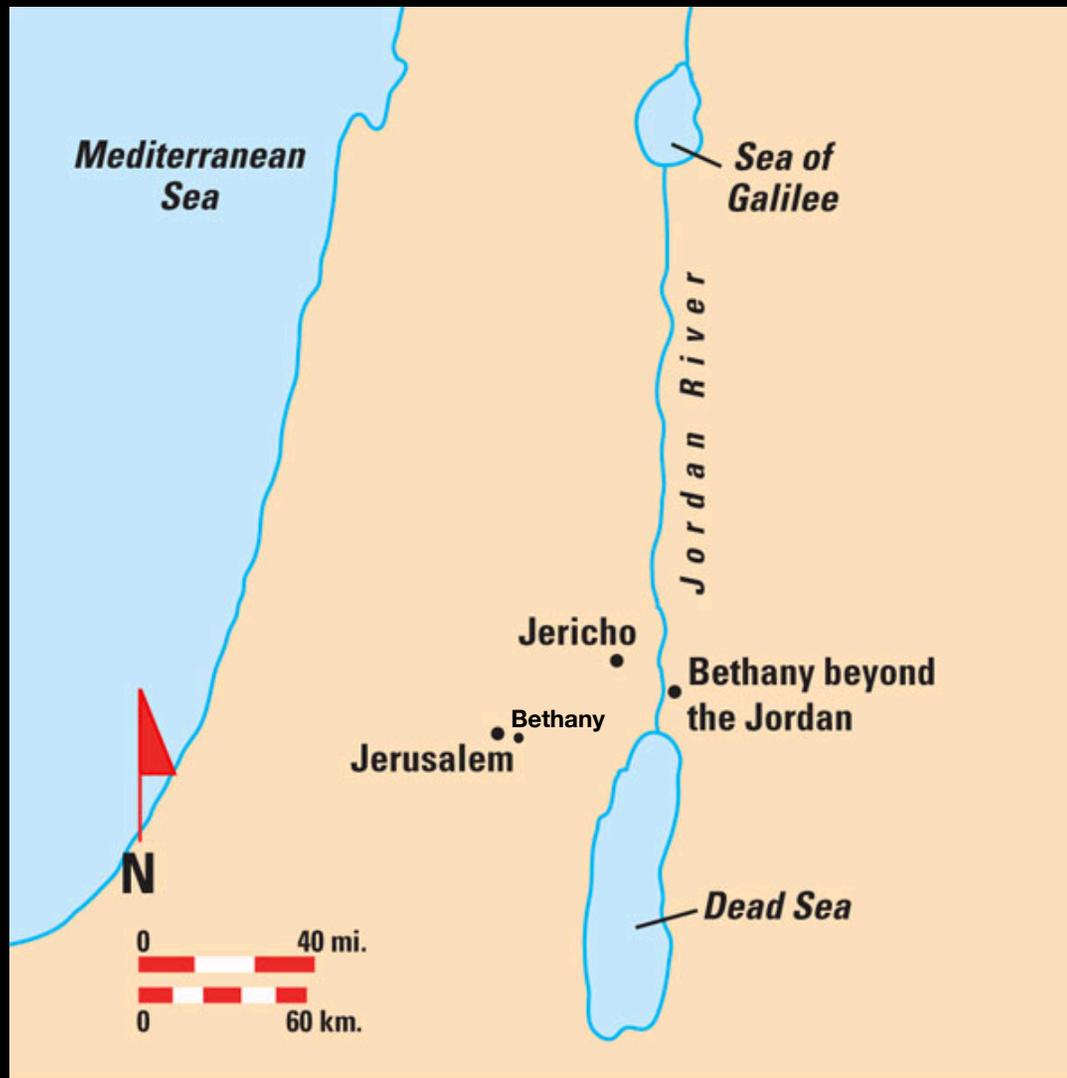
- Who were the Pharisees?
- What are the “overtones” of baptism?

John 1.26-27: John answered, “I baptize with water, but among you stands the one you do not know. He is coming after me, but I am not good enough even to untie his sandals.” (GNB)

John 1.26-27: John answered them, “I baptize with water; but among you stands one whom you do not know, even he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” (RSV)

- What does the word “but” imply when John says, “I baptize with water, but...”?
- How did the delegation respond to “whom you do not know”?
- What does “coming after me” mean?
- Note: PNT has “ὁ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος, ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν”, “who comes after me, **who is ranked before me**” (EOB) or “who coming after me, **is preferred before me**” (NKVJ)

John 1.28:
All this happened in Bethany on the east side of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.
(GNB)



John 1.28:
This took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.
(RSV)

Objectives of the Class

- To behold in our hearts the glory of Christ
- To participate more deeply in life in the Spirit
- To become more conformed to His image

Re-Read
John 1.19-28

Watch and Apply

John 1.19-28

Achieving the Objectives of the Class

- To behold in our hearts the glory of Christ
 - What did you observe that revealed to you the glory of Christ?
- To participate more deeply in life in the Spirit
 - What did you learn that can help you to participate more deeply in the life of the Spirit?
- To become more conformed to His likeness
 - What did you observe in Christ that you need to conform to?

Supplement

Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries by Everett Ferguson

To summarize the relation of John's baptism to some of the Jewish washings, to proselyte baptism, and to the baths of the Essenes: Like all of these, John's baptism was an immersion.²⁸ Unlike all of them, it was an administered rite and not a self-immersion.²⁹ This practice provides the most plausible explanation for the description of John as "the Baptist": He was doing something different, or else the designation would not have distinguished him.

John's baptism, moreover, shared with all the Jewish practices the feature of purification or cleansing. It differed from them, however, in being an eschatological rather than a ceremonial or ritual purification. His call for repentance was to prepare the people against God's coming judgment.³⁰ The eschatological expectation agreed with the outlook of the Qumran community, but that viewpoint is not connected in the texts with their baths, although the imagery of cleansing by water was used to describe the eschatological cleansing. Moreover, their approach was separatist and not addressed to the whole nation. John's baptism had in common with later proselyte baptism being a one-time immersion and not a repeated rite.³¹ It differed from proselyte baptism in being offered to Jews. They were the ones in need of repentance and

Supplement

cleansing. Distinctive of John's baptism in relation to the comparable Jewish immersions was its explicit link with repentance and forgiveness of sins so that the people would be ready for the coming of the Lord.³² His baptism was a conversion baptism but not a variation of proselyte baptism; its premise was repentance, and its purpose was the forgiveness of sins; it was not the basis of a new Israel or to join a new community (the goal was a renewal of Israel).³³

To anticipate the subsequent material: John's baptism was like Christian baptism in its being a one-time administered immersion for the forgiveness of sins. It differed, however, in being accompanied by a confession of sins rather than a confession of faith.³⁴ Related to the latter is the connection of Christian baptism with the name of Jesus. New Testament writers made the distinction that instead of calling for faith in Jesus, John taught people to believe on the one to come.³⁵

The major difference that was stressed, in addition to the connection with faith in Jesus as the Messiah who had come, was the offer of the Holy Spirit in Christian baptism.³⁶