



© ALABASTER CO | Not available or intended for resale or public distribution

1

JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY

¹ This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began ² just as the prophet Isaiah had written: “Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way. ³ He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming! Clear the road for him!’” ⁴ This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. ⁵ All of Judea, including all the people of Jerusalem, went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. ⁶ His clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ John announced: “Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to stoop down like a slave and untie the straps of his sandals. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!”

THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS

⁹ One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰ As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.” ¹² The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness, ¹³ where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him. ¹⁴ Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God’s Good News. ¹⁵ “The time promised by God has come at last!” he announced. “The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!”

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

¹⁶ One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁷ Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” ¹⁸ And they left their nets at once and followed him. ¹⁹ A little farther up the shore Jesus saw Zebedee’s sons, James and John, in a boat repairing their nets. ²⁰ He called them at once, and they also followed him, leaving their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men.

JESUS CASTS OUT AN EVIL SPIRIT

²¹ Jesus and his companions went to the town of Capernaum. When the Sabbath day came, he went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, for he taught with real authority—quite unlike the teachers of religious law. ²³ Suddenly, a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, ²⁴ “Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” ²⁵ But Jesus reprimanded him. “Be quiet! Come out of the man,” he ordered. ²⁶ At that, the evil spirit screamed, threw the man into a convulsion, and then came out of him. ²⁷ Amazement gripped the audience, and they began to discuss what had happened. “What sort of new teaching is this?” they asked excitedly. “It has such authority! Even evil spirits obey his orders!” ²⁸ The news about Jesus spread quickly throughout the entire region of Galilee.

JESUS HEALS MANY PEOPLE

²⁹ After Jesus left the synagogue with James and John, they went to Simon and Andrew’s home. ³⁰ Now Simon’s mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. They told Jesus about her right away. ³¹ So he went to her bedside, took her by the hand, and

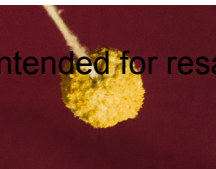
helped her sit up. Then the fever left her, and she prepared a meal for them. ³² That evening after sunset, many sick and demon-possessed people were brought to Jesus. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door to watch. ³⁴ So Jesus healed many people who were sick with various diseases, and he cast out many demons. But because the demons knew who he was, he did not allow them to speak.

JESUS PREACHES IN GALILEE

³⁵ Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. ³⁶ Later Simon and the others went out to find him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said, “Everyone is looking for you.” ³⁸ But Jesus replied, “We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too. That is why I came.” ³⁹ So he traveled throughout the region of Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and casting out demons.

JESUS HEALS A MAN WITH LEPROSY

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. “If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean,” he said. ⁴¹ Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!” ⁴² Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed. ⁴³ Then Jesus sent him on his way with a stern warning: ⁴⁴ “Don’t tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed.” ⁴⁵ But the man went and spread the word, proclaiming to everyone what had happened. As a result, large crowds soon surrounded Jesus, and he couldn’t publicly enter a town anywhere. He had to stay out in the secluded places, but people from everywhere kept coming to him.



2



JESUS HEALS A PARALYZED MAN

¹When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home. ² Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God's word to them, ³ four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. ⁴ They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. ⁵ Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, ⁷ "What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!" ⁸ Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts? ⁹ Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk'?" ¹⁰ So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, ¹¹ "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!" ¹² And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before!"

JESUS CALLS LEVI (MATTHEW)

¹³ Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to him. ¹⁴ As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him. ¹⁵ Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.) ¹⁶ But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?" ¹⁷ When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

A DISCUSSION ABOUT FASTING

¹⁸ Once when John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, some people came to Jesus and asked, "Why don't your disciples fast like John's disciples and the Pharisees do?" ¹⁹ Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. They can't fast while the groom is with them. ²⁰ But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. ²¹ Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before. ²² And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the wine would burst the wineskins, and the wine and the skins would both be lost. New wine calls for new wineskins."

A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE SABBATH

²³ One Sabbath day as Jesus was walking through some grainfields, his disciples began breaking off heads of grain to eat. ²⁴ But the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look, why are they breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath?" ²⁵ Jesus said to them, "Haven't you ever read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ²⁶ He went into the house of God (during the days when Abiathar was high priest) and broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. He also gave some to his companions." ²⁷ Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!"

