

I M M E R S E

The Reading Bible™



MESSIAH

*Almighty God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
grant, we pray,
that we might be grounded and settled
in your truth
by the coming of your Holy Spirit
into our hearts.*

*What we do not know,
reveal to us;
what is lacking within us,
make complete;
that which we do know,
confirm in us;
and keep us blameless in your service,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Amen.

I M M E R S E TM

— The Reading Bible —

MESSIAH



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois

CREATED IN ALLIANCE WITH

 **INSTITUTE**
FOR BIBLE READING

Visit Tyndale online at www.immerseBible.com, www.newlivingtranslation.com, and www.tyndale.com.

Visit the Institute for Bible Reading at www.instituteforbible.com.

Features and Bible helps copyright © 2017 by the Institute for Bible Reading. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Company Bell. Illustrations copyright © Rachael Van Dyke. All rights reserved.

Maps copyright © 2017 by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

Messiah, Immerse: The Reading Bible, is an edition of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation.

Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. All rights reserved.

The text of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, may be quoted in any form (written, visual, electronic, or audio) up to and inclusive of five hundred (500) verses without express written permission of the publisher, provided that the verses quoted do not account for more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the work in which they are quoted, and provided that a complete book of the Bible is not quoted.

When the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, is quoted, one of the following credit lines must appear on the copyright page or title page of the work:

Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

When quotations from the NLT text are used in nonsalable media, such as church bulletins, orders of service, newsletters, transparencies, or similar media, a complete copyright notice is not required, but the initials *NLT* must appear at the end of each quotation.

Quotations in excess of five hundred (500) verses or twenty-five percent (25%) of the work, or other permission requests, must be approved in writing by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Send requests by e-mail to: permission@tyndale.com or call 630-668-8300, ext. 5023.

Publication of any commentary or other Bible reference work produced for commercial sale that uses the New Living Translation requires written permission for use of the NLT text.

TYNDALE, Tyndale's quill logo, *New Living Translation*, *NLT*, and the New Living Translation logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Immerse, Immerse: The Reading Bible, and *Immerse: The Bible Reading Experience* are trademarks of the Institute for Bible Reading.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com or call 800-323-9400.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Title: *Messiah*.

Other titles: Bible. New Testament. English. New Living Translation. 2017.

Description: Carol Stream, Illinois : Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., [2017]

| Series: Immerse, the reading Bible | Gospels presented with same audience epistles (i.e. Jewish Christians most addressed in Matthew, Hebrews, and James). Verses not numbered.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017006145 | ISBN 9781496424136 (softcover)

Classification: LCC BS2095 .N394 2017 | DDC 225.5/20834—dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017006145>

Printed in the United States of America

23 22 21 20 19 18 17
8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Tyndale House Publishers and Wycliffe Bible Translators share the vision for an understandable, accurate translation of the Bible for every person in the world. Each sale of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, benefits Wycliffe Bible Translators. Wycliffe is working with partners around the world to accomplish Vision 2025—an initiative to start a Bible translation program in every language group that needs it by the year 2025.

CONTENTS

Welcome to Immerse: The Bible Reading Experience A7
Introduction to Messiah A9



Luke–Acts is a two-volume history of the early Christian movement written by a Greek physician named Luke, a traveling companion of the apostle Paul. Luke’s two volumes and Paul’s letters were addressed primarily to Gentile audiences and are fittingly grouped together.

Luke–Acts	1	Philemon	203
1 Thessalonians	111	Colossians	207
2 Thessalonians	119	Ephesians	215
1 Corinthians	125	Philippians	225
2 Corinthians	149	1 Timothy	233
Galatians	165	Titus	243
Romans	177	2 Timothy	249



The Gospel of Mark is based largely on the apostle Peter’s memoirs, so it is grouped with Peter’s letters and a similar letter from Jude.

Mark	257	2 Peter	303
1 Peter	293	Jude	309



The Gospel of Matthew was addressed primarily to Jewish believers, as were the books of Hebrews and James.

Matthew	311	James	389
Hebrews	367		



The Gospel of John is grouped together with John's letters,
which were addressed to the same communities.

John 397 2 John 447
1 John 439 3 John 451



The book of Revelation is more distinct in its historical and
literary setting, and it provides a fitting conclusion not
only to the New Testament but to the entire Bible.

Revelation 455

The Stories and the Story 483
Introducing *Immerse: The Reading Bible* 491
The Literary Forms of the Bible 495
NLT: A Note to Readers 499
Map: Israel during the Time of Jesus 500
Map: The Roman Empire during the Spread of Christianity 501
The Immerse Bible Series 502

—— Welcome to ——

I M M E R S E

The Bible Reading Experience

The Bible is a great gift. The Creator of all things entered into our human story and spoke to us. He inspired people over many centuries to shape words into books that reveal his mind, bringing wisdom into our lives and light to our paths. But God's biggest intention for the Bible is to invite us into its Story. What God wants for us, more than anything else, is that we make the Bible's great drama of restoration and new life the story of our lives, too.

The appropriate way to receive a gift like this is to come to know the Bible deeply, to lose ourselves in it precisely so that we can find ourselves in it. In other words, we need to immerse ourselves in it—to read God's words at length and without distraction, to read with deeper historical and literary perspective, and to read through the Bible with friends in a regular three-year rhythm. *Immerse: The Bible Reading Experience* has been specially designed for this purpose.

Immerse: The Reading Bible presents each book of the Bible without the distractions of chapter and verse markers, subject headers, or footnotes—all later historical additions to the text. The *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, is presented in a single-column format with easy-to-read type. To provide meaningful perspective, book introductions give historical and literary context, and the books are often reordered chronologically or grouped with books that share similar ancient audiences. Every feature in this unique Bible enhances the opportunity for readers to engage with God's words in simple clarity.

A more complete explanation of this unique Bible presentation can be found in the articles that begin on page 483 at the back of this volume.

— Introduction to —

MESSIAH

THE FINAL QUARTER OF THE BIBLE describes the fifth covenant that God made with humanity. This covenant flows directly from the ones that came before it. But at the same time, it presents such a contrast to those old covenants that our Bibles are divided into two “testaments” (another word for “covenant”) to express this difference. The First Testament, comprising three-quarters of the Bible, describes the life of God’s people—Abraham and his descendants, the ancient nation of Israel—under the first four covenants (made with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David). The New Testament centers on the story of Jesus the Messiah, the culmination of the First Testament’s long history. The work of Jesus resolves all the narrative threads of the Bible as he fulfills God’s intentions for Israel, for humanity, and for creation.

The prophets of Israel had said that a new covenant of a different kind was on its way. As Jeremiah put it: “‘The day is coming,’ says the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors . . . I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts.’” And Isaiah announced, “People from many nations will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of Jacob’s God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths.’” This would fulfill God’s covenantal promise to Abraham: “‘All the families on earth will be blessed through you.’”

All these things that the prophets foretold are fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus. In him, God came to earth as a human being both to show and to teach his ultimate intentions for humanity and creation. Jesus explained and lived out the deepest meaning of the Scriptures and their story of God’s people. He also offered himself as the ultimate sacrifice both to bring peace between God and humanity and to make peace between all people possible.

The story of Jesus is told from four different perspectives in the Bible books known as “Gospels” (“gospel” means “good news”). All four authors desired to portray the vastly rich and meaningful story of Jesus from a perspective that would resonate with their original audiences. Luke and Mark are written primarily to Gentiles (non-Jews), who are less familiar with the history and traditions of Israel. (Luke is actually the first part of a two-part work along with the book of Acts, which tells the story of Jesus’ earliest followers.) The Gospels of Matthew and John are likely written to Jews who are familiar with Israel’s previous story.

The other books of the New Testament, mostly letters, are also written to these different groups. In this edition, books of the New Testament that aren’t Gospels are grouped with the Gospel that shares a similar audience. Paul’s letters were sent to Greek-speaking followers of Jesus who were mostly Gentiles, and thus are fittingly grouped with Luke–Acts. Luke often traveled with Paul to share the Good News. We present Paul’s letters here in the likely order that they were written. Because Mark’s Gospel is based largely on the apostle Peter’s memoirs, it is grouped with the letters that Peter sent from Rome and a similar letter from Jude. Like the Gospel of Matthew, the books of Hebrews and James address Jewish believers, so these three books are grouped together. Finally, the writings of John (the Gospel and three letters) are grouped together as they were originally addressed to the same communities.

The book of Revelation is unique among the New Testament books in its historical setting and literary genre. Nevertheless, like all the other books of the New Testament, it’s a “revelation from Jesus Christ,” and its content centers on him. It is placed last in this edition because it provides a fitting conclusion not only to the New Testament but also to the entire Story of the Bible. As the book of Revelation draws to a close, God brings his purposes for humanity and creation to their final culmination in “a new heaven and a new earth.” We are left with the grand promise that all will be made new in Christ.

This fresh arrangement of the books highlights the depth of the New Testament’s fourfold witness to Jesus the Messiah. The Son of God, who fulfills all the longings and promises of the collected Scriptures, can be viewed here through the rich variety of lenses provided by the books of the new covenant.

IMMERSED IN LUKE - ACTS

THE LONGEST STORY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT—one that fills a quarter of its pages—was originally addressed to one person. The author dedicates this two-volume series, covering the life of Jesus and the early church, to the “most honorable Theophilus.” This Greek name shows that he was a Gentile (non-Jewish), and his title suggests he was likely a Roman official.

This history of the early Christian movement was written in the mid-60s AD, right around the time when the Roman government first became hostile to Jesus’ followers. Theophilus may have been facing pressure to forsake his allegiance to Jesus. At the same time, some Jewish believers were questioning the place of Gentiles in a movement devoted to a Jewish Messiah. So Theophilus would no doubt welcome the reassurance that what he’d heard about Jesus was genuine and that the Good News really was intended for Gentiles like himself.

Luke was in a unique position to answer these questions. He had worked closely with Paul, who brought the message of Jesus to Gentiles living throughout much of the Roman Empire. Luke was able to tell important parts of the story from firsthand experience. And since he was educated and literate, he could also research and record the movement’s history.

The Good News of Jesus invited Jews and Gentiles to unite into a single new family. So believers from all backgrounds benefited from Luke’s account of God’s story of salvation for the whole world, which had come to surprising fulfillment in Jesus.

The first volume—Luke—begins with a prologue about the remarkable circumstances surrounding Jesus’ birth and early days. From its start, the story shows how Jesus was sent as both the long-promised King of Israel and the Savior of the whole world.

After the introduction, Luke is divided into three main parts:

The first section describes Jesus’ early ministry in Israel’s northern region of Galilee, where he announces “the Good News of the Kingdom of God.”

Luke then portrays Jesus taking the journey south toward Jerusalem, where he fulfills his calling and destiny. Along the way, Jesus continues

to show how the coming of God's reign on earth means freedom for the oppressed and a welcome for outsiders.

The third section shows Jesus' mission coming to its climax in Israel's ancient capital of Jerusalem. During the Jewish Passover festival, his enemies conspire to have him executed on a Roman cross. But Jesus then rises from the dead with royal authority, winning God's great battle against sin and death.

The second volume—Acts—describes how the first community of Jesus' followers brought the message about him to all nations. In six different phases, the Good News about Jesus breaks through some significant barrier as it advances. Each phase ends with a version of the summary statement: "God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased."

Phase one: The message breaks through a linguistic barrier as the Jerusalem community welcomes Greek speakers (pp. 61-70).

Phase two: The message breaks through a geographic barrier by spreading into Judea and Samaria (pp. 70-77).

Phase three: A significant religious and ethnic barrier is broken when the community welcomes Gentiles (pp. 77-82).

Phase four: Another geographic barrier is broken when the Good News moves into Asia Minor (pp. 82-89).

Phase five: Yet another geographic barrier is broken when the Good News spreads into Greece, the cultural center of the ancient Mediterranean world (pp. 89-94).

Phase six: The Good News about Jesus the Messiah reaches all the way to Rome—the very heart of the empire (pp. 95-110).

In this way, Luke–Acts completes its twofold movement. First, Jesus went to Jerusalem to complete his great work through his suffering, death, and resurrection. Second, the persecution of his followers brought the Good News about Jesus from Jerusalem to Rome. In this combined story, it is revealed that Jesus is Israel's promised King and the world's true Ruler.

LUKE



Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.



When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations. They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old.

One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying.

While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will

turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.”

Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I be sure this will happen? I’m an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.”

Then the angel said, “I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn’t believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.”

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the sanctuary, wondering why he was taking so long. When he finally did come out, he couldn’t speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary.

When Zechariah’s week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home. Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. “How kind the Lord is!” she exclaimed. “He has taken away my disgrace of having no children.”

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!”

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!”

Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.”

The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. For the word of God will never fail.”

Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her.

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."

Mary responded,

"Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!
For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.
For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.
He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.
His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.
He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.
He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.
For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.

When it was time for Elizabeth's baby to be born, she gave birth to a son. And when her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had been very merciful to her, everyone rejoiced with her.

When the baby was eight days old, they all came for the circumcision ceremony. They wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father. But Elizabeth said, "No! His name is John!"

"What?" they exclaimed. "There is no one in all your family by that name." So they used gestures to ask the baby's father what he wanted to name him. He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone's surprise he wrote, "His name is John." Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God.

Awe fell upon the whole neighborhood, and the news of what had happened spread throughout the Judean hills. Everyone who heard about it

reflected on these events and asked, “What will this child turn out to be?” For the hand of the Lord was surely upon him in a special way.

Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy:

“Praise the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has visited and redeemed his people.
He has sent us a mighty Savior
from the royal line of his servant David,
just as he promised
through his holy prophets long ago.
Now we will be saved from our enemies
and from all who hate us.
He has been merciful to our ancestors
by remembering his sacred covenant—
the covenant he swore with an oath
to our ancestor Abraham.
We have been rescued from our enemies
so we can serve God without fear,
in holiness and righteousness
for as long as we live.

“And you, my little son,
will be called the prophet of the Most High,
because you will prepare the way for the Lord.
You will tell his people how to find salvation
through forgiveness of their sins.
Because of God’s tender mercy,
the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
and to guide us to the path of peace.”

John grew up and became strong in spirit. And he lived in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.

+

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David’s ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.

Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the LORD." So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—"either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby

Jesus to the Lord as the law required, Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

“Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace,
as you have promised.
I have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared for all people.
He is a light to reveal God to the nations,
and he is the glory of your people Israel!”

Jesus’ parents were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby’s mother, “This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.”

Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshipping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

When Jesus’ parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favor was on him.

Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. When Jesus was twelve years old, they attended the festival as usual. After the celebration was over, they started home to Nazareth, but Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents didn’t miss him at first, because they assumed he was among the other travelers. But when he didn’t show up that evening, they started looking for him among their relatives and friends.

When they couldn’t find him, they went back to Jerusalem to search for him there. Three days later they finally discovered him in the Temple, sitting among the religious teachers, listening to them and asking questions. All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

His parents didn’t know what to think. “Son,” his mother said to him, “why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic, searching for you everywhere.”

“But why did you need to search?” he asked. “Didn’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?” But they didn’t understand what he meant.

Then he returned to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. And his mother stored all these things in her heart.

Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.

+

It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas was ruler over Galilee; his brother Philip was ruler over Iturea and Tracoonitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene. Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness. Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. Isaiah had spoken of John when he said,

“He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,
 ‘Prepare the way for the LORD’s coming!
 Clear the road for him!
 The valleys will be filled,
 and the mountains and hills made level.
 The curves will be straightened,
 and the rough places made smooth.
 And then all people will see
 the salvation sent from God.”

When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, “You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Don’t just say to each other, ‘We’re safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.’ That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. Even now the ax of God’s judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.”

The crowds asked, “What should we do?”

John replied, “If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry.”

Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, “Teacher, what should we do?”

He replied, “Collect no more taxes than the government requires.”

“What should we do?” asked some soldiers.

John replied, “Don’t extort money or make false accusations. And be content with your pay.”

Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. John answered their questions by saying, “I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.” John used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people.

John also publicly criticized Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, for marrying Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for many other wrongs he had done. So Herod put John in prison, adding this sin to his many others.

One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself was baptized. As he was praying, the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit, in bodily form, descended on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.”

Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry.

Jesus was known as the son of Joseph.

Joseph was the son of Heli.

Heli was the son of Matthat.

Matthat was the son of Levi.

Levi was the son of Melki.

Melki was the son of Jannai.

Jannai was the son of Joseph.

Joseph was the son of Mattathias.

Mattathias was the son of Amos.

Amos was the son of Nahum.

Nahum was the son of Esli.

Esli was the son of Naggai.

Naggai was the son of Maath.

Maath was the son of Mattathias.

Mattathias was the son of Semein.

Semein was the son of Josech.

Josech was the son of Joda.

Joda was the son of Joanan.

Joanan was the son of Rhesa.

Rhesa was the son of Zerubbabel.
Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel.
Shealtiel was the son of Neri.
Neri was the son of Melki.
Melki was the son of Addi.
Addi was the son of Cosam.
Cosam was the son of Elmadam.
Elmadam was the son of Er.
Er was the son of Joshua.
Joshua was the son of Eliezer.
Eliezer was the son of Jorim.
Jorim was the son of Matthat.
Matthat was the son of Levi.
Levi was the son of Simeon.
Simeon was the son of Judah.
Judah was the son of Joseph.
Joseph was the son of Jonam.
Jonam was the son of Eliakim.
Eliakim was the son of Melea.
Melea was the son of Menna.
Menna was the son of Mattatha.
Mattatha was the son of Nathan.
Nathan was the son of David.
David was the son of Jesse.
Jesse was the son of Obed.
Obed was the son of Boaz.
Boaz was the son of Salmon.
Salmon was the son of Nahshon.
Nahshon was the son of Amminadab.
Amminadab was the son of Admin.
Admin was the son of Arni.
Arni was the son of Hezron.
Hezron was the son of Perez.
Perez was the son of Judah.
Judah was the son of Jacob.
Jacob was the son of Isaac.
Isaac was the son of Abraham.
Abraham was the son of Terah.
Terah was the son of Nahor.
Nahor was the son of Serug.
Serug was the son of Reu.
Reu was the son of Peleg.

Peleg was the son of Eber.
Eber was the son of Shelah.
Shelah was the son of Cainan.
Cainan was the son of Arphaxad.
Arphaxad was the son of Shem.
Shem was the son of Noah.
Noah was the son of Lamech.
Lamech was the son of Methuselah.
Methuselah was the son of Enoch.
Enoch was the son of Jared.
Jared was the son of Mahalalel.
Mahalalel was the son of Kenan.
Kenan was the son of Enosh.
Enosh was the son of Seth.
Seth was the son of Adam.
Adam was the son of God.

Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.

Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread."

But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them," the devil said, "because they are mine to give to anyone I please. I will give it all to you if you will worship me."

Jesus replied, "The Scriptures say,

'You must worship the LORD your God
and serve only him.'

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

'He will order his angels to protect and guard you.
And they will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'

Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'"

When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.

+ + +

Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon me,
for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released,
that the blind will see,
that the oppressed will be set free,
and that the time of the LORD's favor has come.”

He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. “The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!”

Everyone spoke well of him and was amazed by the gracious words that came from his lips. “How can this be?” they asked. “Isn't this Joseph's son?”

Then he said, “You will undoubtedly quote me this proverb: ‘Physician, heal yourself’—meaning, ‘Do miracles here in your hometown like those you did in Capernaum.’ But I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his own hometown.

“Certainly there were many needy widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the heavens were closed for three and a half years, and a severe famine devastated the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them. He was sent instead to a foreigner—a widow of Zarephath in the land of Sidon. And many in Israel had leprosy in the time of the prophet Elisha, but the only one healed was Naaman, a Syrian.”

When they heard this, the people in the synagogue were furious. Jumping up, they mobbed him and forced him to the edge of the hill on which the town was built. They intended to push him over the cliff, but he passed right through the crowd and went on his way.

Then Jesus went to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught there in the synagogue every Sabbath day. There, too, the people were amazed at his teaching, for he spoke with authority.

Once when he was in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon—an evil spirit—cried out, shouting, “Go away! 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!”

But Jesus reprimanded him. “Be quiet! Come out of the man,” he ordered. At that, the demon threw the man to the floor as the crowd watched; then it came out of him without hurting him further.

Amazed, the people exclaimed, “What authority and power this man’s words possess! Even evil spirits obey him, and they flee at his command!” The news about Jesus spread through every village in the entire region.

After leaving the synagogue that day, Jesus went to Simon’s home, where he found Simon’s mother-in-law very sick with a high fever. “Please heal her,” everyone begged. Standing at her bedside, he rebuked the fever, and it left her. And she got up at once and prepared a meal for them.

As the sun went down that evening, people throughout the village brought sick family members to Jesus. No matter what their diseases were, the touch of his hand healed every one. Many were possessed by demons; and the demons came out at his command, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But because they knew he was the Messiah, he rebuked them and refused to let them speak.

Early the next morning Jesus went out to an isolated place. The crowds searched everywhere for him, and when they finally found him, they begged him not to leave them. But he replied, “I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns, too, because that is why I was sent.” So he continued to travel around, preaching in synagogues throughout Judea.

+

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the water’s edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.”

“Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.” And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.