

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, **2** as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way”—

3 “a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”

4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **5** The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. **6** John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. **7** And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. **8** I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. What is different about the way that Mark begins his gospel account of Jesus? Why do you think Mark offers his gospel in this way?**
- 2. How does Mark describe John the Baptist and his role in the gospel account?**
- 3. What does it mean to repent?**
- 4. Why did John require baptism?**
- 5. What was John’s message regarding the Messiah?**
- 6. What does John mean by “baptizing with the Holy Spirit” Why does he mention it?**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

The theme of this text is a call to prepare the way for the Messiah. It was essentially a call to the nation of Israel, first heralded by the ancient prophets and then by John the Baptist. But it is also a call to us as individuals to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord.

We use this theme during Advent as a spiritual discipline of searching our hearts and repenting of sin, of making room for the Messiah to have his place in our lives, to welcome the Christ into our world recognizing him as our Savior and Lord. How can we do these things? What are some ways that we can truly prepare the way for the Lord in our lives? What do you do in your heart, home and life to prepare for Christmas? Are there steps to observe in preparing for Christmas that reflect our understanding of preparing our hearts for Christ?