

# Born for the Messiah



*Painting  
on the Birth of  
John the Baptist*

## I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

### FIRST READING (Is 49:1-6)

<sup>1</sup>Hear me, O coastlands, / listen, O distant peoples. / The LORD called me from birth, / from my mother's womb he gave me my name. / <sup>2</sup>He made of me a sharp-edged sword / and concealed me in the shadow of his arm. / He made me a polished arrow, / in his quiver he hid me. / <sup>3</sup>**You are my servant**, he said to me, / Israel, through whom I show my glory.

<sup>4</sup>Though I thought I had toiled in vain, / and for nothing, uselessly, spent my strength, / yet my reward is with the LORD, / my recompense is with my God. / <sup>5</sup>For now the LORD has spoken / who formed me **as his servant** from the womb, / that Jacob may be brought back to him / and Israel gathered to him; / and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD, / and my God is now my strength! / <sup>6</sup>It is too little, he says, for you **to be my servant**, / to raise up the tribes of Jacob, / and restore the survivors of Israel; / I will make you a light to the nations, / that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

THE FOCUS: **Servant**

### COMMENTARY

- Our text comes from the Second Isaiah (the prophet in exile), not the prophet in Jerusalem (200 years earlier).
- V.1a has parallel style: hear // listen; o coastlands // distant peoples. The two imperatives are calls to hear / listen.
- Hear what? The answer is in the following lines and verses:  
V.1b The Lord called me from birth (destiny)  
V. 2 The Lord made me a sharp-edged sword, concealed me // polished arrow, he hid me... (weapon) (another parallelism).
- V. 3 is a declaration of his status / mission: You

are my servant, through whom God shows his glory.

- V.4 indicates the feeling of the prophet (toiled in vain, for nothing, uselessly, wasted energy), but there is saving grace: Yet my reward .... // my recompense .... (another parallelism)
- V.5 spells out the mission of the prophet: Jacob be brought back to him // Israel gathered to him (another parallelism)
- Jacob = Israel
- V.6 expresses the feeling of God on the prophet. He is not just a servant to raise up tribes of Jacob // and restore survivors of Israel (parallelism again) , but a light to the nations.

### REFLECTIONS

We need someone who shows us the way (John the Baptist and ultimately Jesus, the prophet of God).

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### RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 92:2-16)

I PRAISE YOU,  
FOR I AM WONDERFULLY MADE.

### SECOND READING (Acts 13:22-26)

<sup>22</sup>In those days, Paul said: "God raised up David as their king; of him he testified, I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will carry out my every wish. <sup>23</sup>From this man's descendants God, according to his promise, has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus. <sup>24</sup>**John heralded his coming** by proclaiming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel; <sup>25</sup>and as John was

completing his course, he would say, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. Behold, one is coming after me; I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.’

<sup>26</sup>“My brothers, children of the family of Abraham, and those others among you who are God-fearing, to us this word of salvation has been sent.”

**THE FOCUS: Witness of John**

### COMMENTARY

- The text is about salvation history beginning with the removal of Saul as King and installation of David as new king who found favor in the Lord.
- In v.23, David is acknowledged as the ancestor of Jesus, the savior of Israel.
- In v.24, John is described as the one who heralded the coming of Jesus, by baptism of repentance. He is unworthy to unfasten Jesus’ sandals (v.25).
- In v.26, the apostles (preachers) inform their audience (children of Abraham and God-fearing = Gentile converts) of the word of salvation sent by God to them.

### REFLECTIONS

The author acknowledges that John the Baptist is destined to be the precursor of Jesus.

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### GOSPEL READING (Lk 1: 57-66, 80)

<sup>57</sup>When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. <sup>58</sup>Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. <sup>59</sup>When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, <sup>60</sup>but his mother said in reply, “No. He will be called John.” <sup>61</sup>But they answered her, “There is no one among your relatives who has this name.” <sup>62</sup>So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. <sup>63</sup>He asked for a tablet and wrote, “John is his name,” and all were

amazed. <sup>64</sup>Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. <sup>65</sup>Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. <sup>66</sup>All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, “What, then, will this child be?” For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

<sup>80</sup>The **child grew and became strong in spirit**, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel.

**THE FOCUS: Life of John the Baptist**

### COMMENTARY

- Part of the infancy narrative of Jesus (Luke 1-2).
- V.56 indicates the months of Mary’s stay in her visitation to Elizabeth and her return to Nazareth
- V.57 is the main line of the gospel text. It indicates the birth of John. His mother is Elizabeth.
- V.58 indicates the reaction (joy) of their neighbors and relatives over the birth of the child.
- For them, the birth means : God’s great mercy.
- In v.59, the circumcision and naming of the child, after 8 days= their Jewish tradition.
- In vv.60-63, the change of name (from Zechariah to John) indicates the different and unique mission of John. He will not be like his father – a priest in the Temple, but a prophet in the desert.
- In v.63, records the feeling of those present (amazement).
- In v.64, Zechariah, the father, can speak again, blessing God. No Canticle of Zechariah here.
- Again, we hear some more feelings about the child (fear came to neighbors). The birth of John provokes questionings (v.65).
- In v.66, people sense his great destiny. “What then will this child be? Rightly they conclude “the hand of the Lord was with him.”
- In v.80, the author gives a note of John’s growth and development, bodily and spiritually.
- Immediately, v.80 signals the mission of John. Now, he is in the desert, preparing and waiting for the time.

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**(TIE THE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR SHARING AND HOMILY)**