

THE JC TEAM

Bible Stories told like never before

Volume 1

The JC Team

THE JC TEAM

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CHAPTER 1

The Encounter

Jesus waded into the cold waters of Jordan, joining the line of men awaiting baptism by John the Baptist. When his turn came, Jesus humbly knelt in the water. John hesitated, recognizing the magnitude of the moment and said, “I am not worthy to baptize you.”

Jesus looked up at John. “Do it this way now, John. God wills it.”

John nodded, acknowledging the divine directive. He gently rested his hand on Jesus’ head and immersed him into the waters of Jordan. As the liquid closed over Jesus, John sensed a strange power surrounding them. He looked around and saw the once clean river turning dark as soot. John understood that this symbolized the dark sins which had been washed away from the many people he had baptized in the river. Moments later, the dark color began to converge and dissolve into Jesus, returning the pristine freshness to the flowing waters of Jordan. It seemed as though Jesus was drawing all the filth towards himself, for he was the Messiah who had come to take upon himself the dark sins of the world and make humanity pure and holy.

Jesus rose from the sparkling waters and John gazed on in awe. Just then, a dove descended from Heaven and rested upon Jesus. In a thunderous voice, God the Father spoke from Heaven, “This is my own dear Son, with whom I am well pleased!”

The people on the shores of Jordan heard the unusual thunder and witnessed the extraordinary radiance around

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Jesus. They grew curious and began talking among themselves.

“Who is that man?” asked an old man inquisitively.

“Isn’t he Mary’s son, Jesus?” wondered a lady.

“Yes, he is Jesus, the son of Joseph the carpenter who died years back,” answered another.

“Look at the shine on his face!” exclaimed a young lad.

Jesus faintly smiled at John and quietly walked away. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert where he prayed and fasted for the next forty days, to be empowered with the spiritual strength needed to begin the new phase of his ‘Mission’ on earth. Satan sensed Jesus was going to pursue his Mission in a radical way and was determined to stop him. In several ways, Satan tempted Jesus in the desert. But Jesus triumphed over each one and defeated Satan.

After completing forty days of persistent prayer and penance, Jesus headed back home. As he slowly strolled down the lonely lane to Nazareth, he felt weak and tired. His body showed weariness, but there was an extraordinary shine in his eyes and an amazing power in his presence.

John the Baptist was with his two disciples by the Jordan River. He noticed Jesus walk by. “Look there!” pointing towards Jesus, the Baptist said to his disciples John and Andrew. “He is ‘The One’-the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world.”

Andrew and John eagerly looked to where the Baptist directed. The Baptist had many times told them that the day would come when he would show them the Messiah, ‘The One’ all Israel had been waiting centuries for.... The Anointed One of God who would change history and redeem Israel forever!

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“Are you sure it’s Him?” Andrew asked the Baptist curiously. “He doesn’t look like a King to me.”

The Baptist nodded, “Yes, I am sure. God the Father showed me a sign to assure me that Jesus is ‘The One’ who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.”

Andrew glanced over at John. “Let’s follow him!” Andrew whispered. John agreed.

So Andrew and John tiptoed behind Jesus.

“What do we tell him?” asked John.

“We’ll tell him we are the Baptist’s disciples and that he has often spoken to us about him,” replied Andrew.

“And then?” prodded John.

“I don’t know! Let’s see where the conversation leads,” Andrew answered, speeding his pace. “He is walking fast. Let’s catch up with him.”

The road was getting crowded as they neared the market.

“John, you go first and speak to him,” suggested Andrew.

John declined, “You do that Andrew. You are the older one.”

“You can have the privilege for now,” Andrew joked.

“Keep it for yourself!” John smiled.

“You are scared, aren’t you?” Andrew teased.

“No, I am not!” John objected.

“Yes, you are!” Andrew reiterated.

“I am not!” John raised his voice, a bit annoyed. “Fine, I’ll go speak to him first!” John took a few fast strides towards Jesus to prove he was not afraid.



Just then, Jesus turned around...and looked straight into John's eyes. John hadn't expected that! He stood dumbfounded for an instant and quickly made a full turn himself, his heart pounding hard. It felt like Jesus had just caught him red-handed sneaking on him!

Jesus' gaze then slowly shifted towards Andrew, who nervously turned to the wayside shop, acting as though he was searching for something to buy from there.

Jesus gave a small smile, turned, and walked away.

"Whew! That was close," John said in relief.

"Why didn't you speak to him?" demanded Andrew.

"I didn't think he would turn around like that...and he looked straight at me! As though he knew I was stalking him!" John stated.

"Well, now we've lost him," Andrew said in dismay as he glanced at the busy crowd into which Jesus had disappeared.

John sighed. "Maybe we'll get to see him again...somewhere."

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John and Andrew walked back, sad that they had missed the opportunity to meet Jesus. As they were silently brooding over these thoughts, a voice from behind sounded, “May I help you?”

The two spun around and were surprised to see Jesus standing there with a pleasant smile.

Andrew and John exchanged amused glances and sheepishly smiled back at Jesus.

Jesus asked again in a friendly manner, “Are you searching for someone?”

Feeling more confident in the presence of Jesus’ disarming smile, John stepped near him and looked into his eyes, sparkling with life and power.

“Rabbi, where do you live?” he asked Jesus.

Andrew glanced curiously at John, wondering, ‘Now that isn’t supposed to be the first dialogue to a stranger!’

Jesus invited, “Come and see,” and beckoned them to follow him. While the three men walked down the dusty lane, John noticed Jesus was exhausted.

“It seems like you’ve been on a long journey,” he spoke.

Jesus looked at him and smiled. “I’m just at the beginning of a long journey.”

“Who all do you have at home?” queried Andrew.

“My mother,” Jesus answered.

“That’s it?” Andrew asked.

Jesus nodded. “My father, Joseph, passed away when I was a boy. My mother looked after me since then. I’m the only child.”

“How do you earn a living?” asked John.

“My father was a carpenter. He taught me his work,” Jesus replied.

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“You must be very close to your mother,” presumed Andrew.

“She means a lot to me,” Jesus smiled at Andrew. “I’ve been away for a while...can’t wait to see her.”

“How long have you been away?” John inquired.

“Forty long days,” Jesus answered with a deep sigh.

“Where were you?” John asked curiously.

Jesus didn’t reply. He deeply pondered over his forty-day experience in the desert where Satan had fiercely challenged him. The duel between the duo had begun there, and it was a battle for souls that would last till the end of the world.

The men walked down a narrow path towards a little home, from where the happy chirping of little birds resounded. Vibrant butterflies fluttered around the garden, where a fair lady in a white robe and blue mantle was watering the plants.

Jesus opened the wooden gate and announced, “This is my home....and that is my mother, Mary.”

Mary looked towards them. Her face lit up when she saw Jesus. She rushed to him and embraced him with a warm welcome.

“Glad you are back home,” she kissed his forehead, and they exchanged smiles.

“Mother, meet my friends John and Andrew. They will stay with us today,” he informed. Mary greeted them and welcomed them inside. “Do come in. Feel at home.” After washing their hands and feet, they helped themselves to a meal prepared by Mary.

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Andrew observed his surroundings, taking in details of the room. At the corner, he saw a spinning wheel and a few pieces of cloth. In the adjacent room, he noticed a hammer and a few nails resting on a half-finished table.

“We have been invited to Rebecca’s son’s wedding at Cana,” informed Mary. “It is tomorrow.”

“Good,” responded Jesus. “We can all go together!”

CHAPTER 2

The Miracle at Cana

Cana was full of excitement the next day as guests gathered for the big wedding. Jesus, John, and Andrew were meeting and chatting with the men, while Mary was with the women, lending a helping hand in doing little chores here and there.

“More wine! The guests want more wine!” announced a boy to the serving ladies. The ladies looked at each other in panic. One of them went over to Rebecca and whispered, “There is no more wine.”

Rebecca was startled. “No wine?!” A wedding where wine runs out is a disgrace to the host. Rebecca became upset. Mary sensed something was worrying her, for Rebecca’s face revealed her anxiety.

“Rebecca, what is wrong?” asked Mary, concerned.

Rebecca held Mary’s arm. “We have run out of wine. O Mary, if people hear of it, they will make fun of us. My poor son! They will insult him on his wedding day. He might even hate me for my negligence!” Rebecca said in tears.

Mary consoled her. “Don’t cry Rebecca, we’ll find a solution. Jesus is here. I shall go speak to him.”

Mary went to the wedding banquet and searched for Jesus in the crowd. Music and dancing filled the air with celebration and people were talking in loud voices over the noise.

Mary scanned the crowd. She spotted Jesus in the distance, talking with John and Andrew. Mary began walking towards Jesus. She observed there was an extraordinary radiance on Jesus’ face. There always was that shine when he spoke about God the Father and the eternal Home of Heaven.

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She remembered how years ago, when Jesus was a twelve-year-old child, he got lost in the Temple of Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary had frantically searched three whole days before they found him with the Teachers of the Law, discussing the Scriptures like a wise young man. That was the day she first saw the extraordinary shine on his face.

As she walked on toward Jesus, the words some village women spoke to her a few weeks ago after his baptism at the Jordan resonated in her mind.

“There is something extraordinary about your Son, Mary!” one lady had said to Mary after the strange happening at the Jordan River.

“He is a chosen one of God, a prophet!” exclaimed another.

Mary listened to these statements. She kept them in her heart but never spoke a word back.

Now, as she walked towards Jesus, these words were again echoing in her mind, but she couldn’t understand why.

Suddenly, within the deep depths of her heart, a gentle voice affirmed, “Mary, it is time.”

Mary stood still for a moment. She sensed the voice within. She knew it was God the Father. He was saying it was time to let go....

Mary’s steps slowly reached Jesus. He was engrossed in a discussion with John and Andrew, but the moment he saw his mother, he stopped, for he noticed her disturbed countenance.

“Yes, Mother?” Jesus asked.

“Jesus, they have run out of wine,” she informed.

Jesus stared at her, a bit confused, for her eyes were telling him something even deeper.

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“Don’t worry, Mother.” John assured, “We could hurry downtown and get wine before anyone figures it’s reached the bottom.”

“I know a friend who can help us. Shall we go?” asked Andrew.

Mary didn’t reply but just gazed on at Jesus.

Jesus’ mind raced back to memories of his childhood. The day he had been in the Temple of Jerusalem, at age twelve. He had been staying close to Joseph and Mary like a good, obedient child. As he was passing by the hall where the Teachers had assembled to discuss the Scriptures, the statements made, captured his interest. They were talking about ‘God of Justice’ and ‘God of Mercy’- which is the true face of God? The comments made by some of them were not true, as they believed more in ‘Justice’ than ‘Mercy’ and were painting God’s image as that of a harsh, severe lawmaker who breaks those who break His law.

Zeal for God’s truth took hold of him and, forgetting that he was just a twelve-year-old boy who ought to be with his parents at the moment, Jesus stepped in and joined the discussion, much to the amazement and amusement of the Teachers. But once Jesus spoke, the Teachers were convinced that Jesus was well-versed with the Scriptures and welcomed him to share his views.

He did later think of his parents but thought they would understand - God the Father desires this of him now. After all, they knew he was the Son of God and this was his Mission.

Three days later, when Joseph and Mary, after a long, frantic search, finally found him in the Temple and informed him how worried they had been about him- only then did he realize how anxious they had been about his disappearance.

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At that moment, on an impulse, he replied, “Why did you have to be so worried? Didn’t you know I have to be about my Father’s work?” Jesus did not know that statement would hurt them so much.

It was when he observed the sad faces of his parents after this remark that he realized he shouldn’t have said it, for it seemed rude. He felt sorry he had hurt his parents by straying away from them and now, by saying something in a blunt way.

Jesus’ eyes welled with tears as his parents looked at each other and silently left the room.

One Teacher said, “Boy, would you like to stay on with us for the discussions? We could ask your parents for permission.”

Jesus shook his head. “No, I am going back home with them.”

He followed his parents to the Temple gate. His heart was beating hard. In his heart, he prayed, “Abba Father, I surrender myself to the Mission You have entrusted me with, for You are my Father and I am Your Son. But kindly consider my obligation to these parents in whose care You have placed me, Joseph and Mary....Abba direct me through them. Put Your words in their hearts and let them speak Your will to me. From now on, reveal Your will to me through them.” Jesus then clutched onto Joseph’s and Mary’s hands firmly, smiled at them warmly, and walked home to Nazareth with them.

Now, as Jesus gazed into Mary’s eyes - he could see her heart had been moved by God the Father, and her words had been inspired by His Word. She wasn’t asking him to go buy wine, but to make wine, do a miracle!

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John interrupted Jesus' thoughts as he asked, "Shall we go, Jesus?"

Jesus wanted to speak with his mother, but he couldn't openly say what he wanted to say because John and Andrew were there.

Instead, Jesus said to her, "What does it mean to you and me? It is not my time yet." He gazed into her eyes for an affirmation. Did she mean what he thought she meant?

Just then, Rebecca arrived with her servants. "Jesus, will you be able to help us?" she asked.

Mary pulled her gaze away from Jesus and said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

The servants nodded in submission and looked at Jesus for instructions.

Jesus' gaze was still fixed on his mother. He knew her heart was bleeding. If he did a miracle here now, it would reveal his power to the crowd. It would mark the beginning of his Mission. He would have to leave Nazareth- his home, and his mother, and begin a new journey to the ends of the earth. Mary would from now be alone in her little home of Nazareth –alone with sweet memories of Joseph and Jesus to cherish.

Jesus closed his eyes for a moment and prayed in his heart, "Abba Father, please take care of her. Give her strength."

He then turned to the servants and directed, "Fill those stone jars with water."

The servants hurried to fill water in the six stone jars placed near the entrance for the ceremonial cleansing. When they were all filled to the brim, Jesus walked towards the jars. He said a silent prayer over each jar and touched them. Then he turned to the servants and said, "Serve it to the guests."

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The servants looked at each other curiously. One of them went towards the first jar and dipped a cup into it. He sipped the liquid, and his eyes bulged out, bewildered.

“The water has turned into wine!” he exclaimed excitedly. One by one, the servants eagerly tasted it and were amazed. Joyfully, they served the ‘miracle wine’ to the guests.

“You have kept the best for last!” commented one guest as he sipped at his second helping.

Andrew and John were overjoyed.

“Truly Jesus is ‘The One!’” exclaimed John jubilantly.

Andrew and John lifted Jesus on their shoulders and danced their way into the merry crowd, absorbed in music and celebration.

Jesus looked one last time at his mother. She lifted her hand in a gesture of blessing and managed a faint smile. Her eyes trailed Jesus as John and Andrew disappeared with him in the crowd.

Then, she went to a lonely corner and burst out into loud sobs. She knew that from this moment on, a new chapter begins in her life with her Son...of separation and agony, that would end on the Hill of Calvary.

Today he had turned water into wine ...the day would come when he would transform wine into His Blood!

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