*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

September 16 - 21

*Jesus Fulfills Old Testament Prophecy*

**Monday, September 16 Matthew 1:18-25; Isaiah 7:10-14**

*“The virgin will conceive a child”*

Joseph is engaged to Mary, but before the marriage and its sexual consummation, he discovers that she is pregnant. No doubt greatly upset, he nevertheless wants to minimize her shame and so plans a quiet divorce, the method of formally ending a Jewish betrothal. God’s angel, however, appears to him in a dream, explaining that the child was conceived by means of the Holy Spirit and instructing him to continue plans for the marriage. He commands them to name the child “Jesus” (“The Lord saves”), explaining that he will be the savior of his people, not from the physical oppression of the Roman occupation but from the spiritual enslavement of their sins.

Joseph obeys, and the passage ends with Matthew reinforcing the supernatural nature of this conception, as the young couple refrains from sexual relations not only until their marriage, but also before Jesus’ birth. In these remarkable events Matthew sees the fulfillment of prophecy about what is commonly referred to as the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), bolstered by references to the child as “Immanuel,” meaning “God with us” (Isaiah 8:8, 10).

*You use faithful people, Lord, to fulfill your purposes. Amen.*

**Tuesday, September 17 Luke 3:3-6; Isaiah 40:3-5**

*“Prepare the way of the Lord”*

Luke portrays John the Baptist’s ministry as a call to repentance, the turning away from sin and toward God. Ministering in the desert in fulfillment of the pattern of salvation indicated by Isaiah, John preaches in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. His ministry in the Jordan River region is designed to get people ready for the arrival of God’s salvation by having hearts open to respond to the coming Messiah. This is why in citing Isaiah, Luke mentions the leveling of obstacles in the way of God’s arrival. If the creation bows to God’s coming, certainly human heart should as well.

According to Isaiah 40, God will deliver his people and give them the comfort of salvation. When the Gospel writers point to this text, they inform us that John’s ministry means God is at work to save his people. God is approaching us, so creation should unfurl itself like a giant red carpet with pomp and honor to note his arrival. Among the evidences of such a carpet is a repentant heart (Isaiah 57:14-17).

*You promised salvation, Lord, and in Christ you fulfilled your promise. Amen.*

**Wednesday, September 18 Matthew 3:13-17; Isaiah 42:1-4**

*“My Son, with whom I am well pleased”*

For most of his life Jesus had lived in Nazareth, awaiting the time when the Father would direct him to begin his public ministry. His act of being baptized by John was a complete and full identification with the Kingdom that John was announcing. Baptism symbolized the turning from the old to the new. Jesus’ baptism was his own symbolic act of participation in the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ use of the word “righteousness” is significant, for righteousness is the word which denotes right relationship. Jesus’ act of being baptized was a witness to the rightness of his relationship with God.

The voice from heaven has two phrases, each a quotation from the Old Testament. In Psalm 2:7, a psalm which described the Messiah as the coming King, we read, “You are my Son.” In Isaiah 42:1, the description of the suffering servant, we read, “who pleases me.” At Jesus’ baptism he is given this divine confirmation from the Father, a word of his being and his behavior, of his acceptance and his approval. The person of the King is now identified as the Son of God!

*As your child, Father, may I be pleasing to you. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

September 16 - 21

*Jesus Fulfills Old Testament Prophecy*

**Thursday, September 19 John 12:12-16; Psalm 118:25-29; Zechariah 9:9-10**

*“These things had been written about him”*

At the beginning of Passover week Jesus enters Jerusalem in messianic fashion, mounted on a donkey, and is greeted by the crowd with the words of Psalm 118:26: “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” “The one who comes” was technical language for the Messiah. Although Jesus had frustrated earlier efforts by some of his followers to “take him by force to make him king” (John 6:15), he now rides into the Jewish capital mounted on a donkey in keeping with Old Testament prophecy.

Jesus’ choice of a donkey invokes prophetic imagery of a king coming in peace (Zechariah 9:9-10), which contrasts sharply with notions of a political warrior-messiah. By riding on a donkey, Jesus expresses his willingness to become the king of Israel, though in more humble terms than the prevailing nationalism of the day. John duly notes that the disciples did not understand the significance of this event at first, but later they realized that what had happened fulfilled Scripture.

*As your disciple, Jesus, help me to see the ways you fulfill Scripture. Amen.*

**Friday, September 20 Matthew 26:57-68; Isaiah 50:4-9**

*“Then they began to spit in Jesus’ face . . .”*

After Jesus’ arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, he is brought to Caiaphas, the high priest, for interrogation. Because Jesus remains silent while he is accosted with false accusations, Caiaphas finally charges him directly, under oath, to declare if he is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus replies, “You have said it,” affirming who he is. Jesus goes on to claim to be the exalted, heavenly Son of Man, one who is Lord, one who will be seated next to the Father himself in heaven. Declaring him guilty of blasphemy, they proceed to physically abuse him.

The prophet Isaiah received many prophecies from God about the Messiah, about 700 years before Jesus was born. In Isaiah 50:4-9, Isaiah wrote about the abuse that the Messiah would endure at the hands of sinful people, that he would offer his back to those who beat him, his cheeks to those who rip out his beard, and his face to those who mock and spit on him. Yet, he would not be put to shame for God is with him.

*As were you, Jesus, your people today will be hated, and God is with us. Amen.*

**Saturday, September 21 Acts 8:26-35; Isaiah 53:7-9**

*“Who was the prophet talking about?”*

The centerpoint of the story is the reading of the Old Testament. Here is a man who is actually using his Bible, or, more accurately, a specific scroll while he is sitting in his seat on the ancient equivalent of his private jet. He is reading from the prophet Isaiah and, since people almost always read aloud in those days, Philip heard what he was reading. Philip’s question about whether the eunuch understood what he was reading got the response he needed to share the good news with him.

The passage the eunuch was reading (Isaiah 53:7-9) talks of the unjust humiliation and suffering of the Lord’s servant. His question about the identity of this servant becomes a launching pad for Philip’s telling him about Jesus - about his arrest and subsequent interrogation, his beatings and the efforts to humiliate him, his conviction and death on a cross as if he were a common criminal, and his burial in a rich man’s tomb. Then, Philip would certainly have moved beyond the Isaiah text itself and told the man about the resurrection of Jesus.

*I desire to know your Word well, Lord, so I can use it to tell your story. Amen.*