*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

September 23 - 28

*The New Testament’s Use of Old Testament Texts*

**Monday, September 23 Matthew 4:12-17; Isaiah 9:1-5**

*“This fulfilled what God said through Isaiah”*

John the Baptist had been the herald of Jesus the Messiah, announcing the coming of the King and his Kingdom. John’s fearless preaching and his ethical integrity in holding men and women accountable led to his arrest and imprisonment. The arrest of John, which led to his execution, focused the attention of society upon Jesus, the new teacher of righteousness who emerged upon the scene in Galilee.

The main body of the Gospel begins in verse 17 as Jesus “from then on began to preach” the message of repentance and participation in the Kingdom of God. The final event of Jesus’ preparation for ministry that Matthew finds significant enough to narrate is his move from Nazareth to Capernaum as his Galilean residence. Matthew sees in this move an explicit fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. Zebulun and Naphtali were the Old Testament territories closest to first-century Galilee. Jesus is the light drawing the people of those regions, including Gentiles as well as Jews.

*You are the light of the world, Jesus, bringing me out of darkness. Amen.*

**Tuesday, September 24 Matthew 11:2-5; Isaiah 29:18-21, 35:5-7**

*“Tell John what you have heard and seen”*

It is natural for John to experience perplexity as he languishes in prison, much as had earlier prophets such as Elijah (e.g., 1 Kings 19:1-18) when their human experience did not fully correspond with God’s message through them. John rightly expected the Messiah to be a judging figure, so events are not unfolding as he anticipated. The divine judgment and time of messianic blessing do not seem to have arrived as he projected. Jesus is not carrying out judgment; rather, it looks like he is concentrating on healing and helping. John needs to have his understanding of the messianic program reconfirmed.

Jesus reiterates to John’s disciples that the way his ministry has unfolded is in line with the prophetic promises. In Jesus’ ministry are fulfilled prophecies that described the coming messianic ministry in these very terms: the blind receive sight (Isaiah 29:18; 35:5), the lame walk (Isaiah 35:6), the deaf hear (Isaiah 29:18-19), the dead are raised (Isaiah 26:18-19), and the good news is preached to the poor (Isaiah 61:1).

*Your work, Jesus, gave evidence that you are the Messiah. Amen.*

**Wednesday, September 25 Acts 13:44-49; Isaiah 49:1-6**

*“A light to the Gentiles”*

On the Sabbath, Paul and Barnabas had shared the gospel of Jesus Christ in the synagogue in Antioch. Their message was so well received that they were asked to speak again the following week, and “almost the entire city turned out to hear them.” But some of the Jews became jealous, and they opposed Paul’s message with abusive talk. Paul and Barnabas responded to this by stating what became a feature of their ministry and of Paul’s theology. They would preach to the Jews first, but if their response was unworthy of eternal life, they would go to the Gentiles.

The refusal of the Jews to believe serves as a reason for the apostles to go to the Gentiles who are equally included in God’s purpose of salvation as laid down in Scripture. The Lord has given them his command, which they find in the words of Isaiah 49:6, to be a light to the Gentiles, bringing salvation to all the world. While Paul spoke with confidence on this occasion about his ministry to the Gentiles, this phenomenon of Jewish rejection of the gospel hurt him deeply and inflamed his desire to yearn and pray for their salvation (Romans 9:1-3; 10:1).

*I praise you, heavenly Father, that your salvation is for all people. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

September 23 - 28

*The New Testament’s Use of Old Testament Texts*

**Thursday, September 26 Romans 9:30-33; Isaiah 28:14-19**

*“They stumbled over the stone”*

While all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile, become part of the Kingdom of God, Jews and Gentiles have arrived via different paths. The Gentiles had not been pursuing their own righteousness; ignorant of God’s promises and excluded from the covenant God made with the Jews, they had no concept of right standing with God. But when God offered it to them in his grace and through the preaching of the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, they responded in faith and so obtained it.

The Jews, on the other hand, had been pursuing their own righteousness through obedience to the law; they were the recipients of God’s promises and partners in a covenant with God. Like a walker so intent on pursuing a certain goal that she stumbles and falls over a rock lying right in her path, so Israel, myopically concentrating on the law and its demands, missed Christ, “the stone” that God placed in her path. Instead of turning to Christ, most kept right on pursuing righteousness with God through the law.

*Having put my trust in you, Jesus, I have not stumbled over you. Amen.*

**Friday, September 27 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; Isaiah 25:6-8**

*“Death is swallowed up in victory”*

Our mortal, earthly body, which is susceptible to death and decay, must be transformed into an immortal, heavenly body which will never die nor experience decay, so that we may live eternally in heaven with God. This transformation will take place at the Second Coming of Christ. By citing Isaiah 25:8, Paul ties God’s triumph over death to the resurrection of the body. For Paul, resurrection is necessary for us to receive eternal life, a life that death cannot spoil for death itself has been destroyed.

Paul celebrates God’s final victory over death, both in the resurrection of Christ and in its implications for all humanity, by quoting Hosea 13:14. The rhetorical questions asked of death serve as a defiant sneer at death’s impotence in the face of God’s powerful act of mercy and forgiveness in Christ. Death’s dominion over the whole earth has been ended, its “sting” drained of potency as it is no longer able to eternally separate us from God. While believers experience physical death, it no longer contains the poison that kills us spiritually.

*I need not fear death, Lord, for it cannot separate me from you. Amen.*

**Saturday, September 28 Hebrews 2:11-18; Psalm 22:22-24; Isaiah 8:16-18**

*“Jesus and we who are made holy have the same Father”*

When the author of Hebrews speaks of us as “sons,” he has specific reasons for doing so. The concept of sonship flows from the author’s view of Jesus as *the* Son, and of all who believe in *the* Son of God being given the right to become themselves sons of God. The author uses “sons” to refer to the people of God, male and female, as God’s honored children. So when a female Christian reads that Jesus brings “many sons to glory,” she should interpret the statement as meaning “Jesus brings me to glory as an honored child of God.”

The term “brothers” is taken from the Old Testament text of Psalm 22:22. In ancient culture the image of brotherhood spoke of the intimacy of relationship, shared experience, and loyalty. Thus, the image communicates a close association between Jesus and those who have placed their faith in him. Jesus proclaims God’s name to all, male and female, who have come together in the name of the Father, for they worship together with their “big brother” in the harmony of God’s love.

*I am your child, Father, for you have adopted me into your family. Amen.*