

Reading Schedule for September 3-9, 2018

Yesterday we concluded with the Book of Revelation on a high note. Our forever connection with Christ is anticipated with excitement and appreciation. Jesus wins and we are on his side. But I always like to learn more about the life of Christ. I don't want to get too far from the Gospel record that tells us about Jesus' life and what he came to do. This draws me back to the Book of Matthew as we launch into the fall season. Reading about Jesus and contemplating his life is really the pentacle of our spiritual journey. Enjoy!

September 3 – Matthew 1:1-25: “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (v.21) I'm sure the genealogy isn't especially exciting to you, but it is interesting to realize that four women are included in Matthew's genealogy. There is Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. It is interesting that he includes these women, because they are not women of great ethical and moral character. Possibly the message is that God sent his Son for all people. Yet the message could be that God's plan is never thwarted. His plan for Jesus was to save people from their sins. The Greek word “Jesus” means “the Lord saves.” How do you respond to this first chapter as we begin reading through the Book of Matthew?

September 4 – Matthew 2:1-12: “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.” (v.6) Micah wrote these words in approximately 700 B.C. This particular verse is in Micah 5:2. I think it is interesting to realize that the scholars of that day perceived this verse as a message about the Messiah. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Herod did not anticipate the Messiah with excitement. He thought of this predicted ruler as a threat to his kingdom. I was thrilled by the fact that God had a plan from the very beginning and he spoke through various prophets about his plan. As God's plan unfolds these prophetic predictions make total sense. Of course, Jesus would be born in Bethlehem and God would bring it about. What aspect of the story of the Magi gets your attention?

September 5 – Matthew 2:13-23: “When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.” (v.16) Do you remember reading Revelation 12 and that the dragon would devour the child the moment it was born (verse 4)? In the same way, the evil King Herod tried to destroy the infant Jesus. We can understand that Herod's desire to kill the newborn was motivated by Satan, or “the dragon.” Jesus' quiet birth in the town of Bethlehem was sure to have cosmic significance from that moment on. Verse 18 is a quote from Jeremiah 31:15, which specifically predicts the exile of the Jews. And so too, the attempt on Jesus' life was intended to wipe out the Chosen One of God. But the Lord would protect his plan, and His Son, as we can always be assured of. How do you respond to this familiar story of the evil King Herod?

September 6 – Matthew 3:1-17: “And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’” (v.17) There are several verses to

highlight as we will realize throughout our reading in the Book of Matthew. But God brought my attention to the words of affirmation from the Father God to his Son Jesus as he was baptized. It is interesting to think about the fact that Jesus was baptized, and yet in many ways did not need to be. However, Jesus came as an example for us all. His baptism is a forerunner for our baptism. As his followers, he asks us to show our faith through baptism. I believe in the doctrine of baptism very strongly and will continue to promote it within our body. Have you been baptized? Do you know someone else who has faith in Christ that hasn't yet taken the step of baptism? Why not challenge them to follow Jesus in the waters of baptism?!

September 7 – Matthew 4:1-11: “Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’” (v.4) I think we can all relate to Jesus' temptation as the devil comes to influence him. We know that the devil is trying to influence us to stumble and sin. Jesus' example is very helpful, as each and every time the devil taunts him, he uses the Word of God to combat the devil's attempt. We know in other places in the Bible it says to resist the devil and he will flee from us, and that is exactly what Jesus did. As Jesus was weak from fasting for 40 day, the devil comes when he is obviously more vulnerable. He will do the same in your life. Fortify yourself in God's truth, stand firm in the faith and resist him with God's Word. Does this make sense? How do you respond to these very relevant verses?

September 8 – Matthew 4:12-25: “‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’” (v.19) Do you see the purpose that Jesus had for his disciples? Do you think his purpose is similar in your life? Jesus did not just want them to be his followers, but rather to empower them to be productive spiritually in a world of darkness. In other words, they were to fish for souls. If we are to apply this teaching to our life, that would mean that we would share the Gospel with others. The illustration of being a fisherman means that we come with baited hook, cast our line in hopes of catching fish. These men would know exactly what it means to catch fish, and Jesus would then give them an even higher purpose. You have the same purpose. How does this challenge you?

September 9 – Matthew 5:1-12: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (v.3) Any one of these statements would be worth highlighting. In fact, I have done a whole series on the beatitudes, and each one of these verses turned into a message. But this first one kicks it all off with a sense of humility before God, knowing that we need his help. The New Living Translation (NLT) translates the phrase “poor in spirit” to those who recognize their need for God. I think that is a powerful way to translate it. I think this sets all the other principles in motion. We step into relationship with Christ through humble faith, and then the emphasis of these other verses come to life. Do you agree? Which beatitude gets your attention? Why?

PRAYER: The fall season has begun. May the Lord inspire us to serve him, as well as meet with others so we might grow spiritually.