

Daily Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

October 2 – Isaiah 5: 1 – 7

In today's reading, Isaiah uses the analogy of a vineyard to describe God's relationship to his people (Israel). In this analogy, Isaiah pictures God as lovingly and painstakingly establishing and tending a vineyard that turns out to be unproductive. The vineyard represents Israel. God had raised Israel up to be a nation that would bear fruit by showing the world the glory of God, but in spite of God's care and faithfulness toward them, Israel was unproductive. Rather than showing the nations the glory of God, they forsook God and worshipped idols, and so God was about to judge them.

800 years later when Jesus came, he built on this analogy that Isaiah had spoken, and used it to describe what was about to happen to Israel. Because the Israelites refused to accept him as their messiah, God was going to uproot them once again and give their vineyard to others. When Jesus said this he was speaking about us, his church, becoming the new vineyard of God. The refusal of the Jews to trust Jesus as their messiah and savior, opened the door for the Gentiles to receive the blessing of salvation.

Matthew 21:33-45 "Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. ³⁴ When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. ³⁵ "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶ Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷ Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. ³⁸ "But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' ³⁹ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹ "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? ⁴³ "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. ⁴⁴ He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." ⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them.

If Jesus were here today, how would he evaluate what our vineyards are producing?

Matthew 3:8 *Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.*

October 3 – Isaiah 6: 1 – 10

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah receives his commission from the Lord to go out among the Israelites as a prophet. As Isaiah receives this commission, he is given a stunning vision of God in His glory. As Isaiah sees the glory and holiness of God, he becomes painfully aware of his own sinfulness. Look what Isaiah says in verse five as he becomes aware of who God is and how sinful he is. “Woe is me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips.” Isaiah realized that he was a sinful man, and as he saw himself standing in the presence of a Holy God, Isaiah felt like he was disintegrating and falling apart at the seams. The truth is Isaiah couldn’t stand to be in the presence of God because of his sinfulness. No matter how good we may think we are, God’s holiness reveals just how sinful we are, and God’s glory makes us feel small. We don’t even come close to seeing God the way that Isaiah did, but if we did we would feel exactly the same way Isaiah felt. The more we see of God’s holiness and the more we see of our sinfulness, the more acutely we become aware of our great need for a savior.

As we read what happens next, it almost seems as if God is being very cruel to Isaiah, as one of the angels that is encircling the throne of God takes a burning coal and touches to Isaiah’s unclean lips. This is not a punishment; it is a cleansing. What was it that Isaiah attributed his uncleanliness to? It was his lips. What would Isaiah need in order to be a prophet for God? Clean lips that could proclaim the word of the Lord. The hot coal cleansed Isaiah’s sin and purified his lips and made him ready to be of service to God. We don’t have to have anything like that happen to us. Because Jesus took the white hot wrath of God for us on the cross our sins are forgiven and we are cleansed. Because of Jesus we are cleansed and ready to serve.

Look how Isaiah responds to the cleansing. He doesn’t ask why did you do that, because he knows why. Instead when God asks the courtroom of heaven who He can send to proclaim His word to His people; Isaiah says, “Here I am. Send me!” Like Isaiah, each of us has been cleansed by the blood of Christ, therefore each of us is ready for service. God cleans us up in order to send us out!

October 4 – Isaiah 7: 1 – 17

To better understand this passage we need to understand the context of what is going on at the time these words are spoken. First, remember that by the time of Isaiah the Kingdom of Israel has been split in two by God. There are 10 Northern tribes that are referred to as Israel, Ephraim, or Samaria (In the Book of Isaiah all of these names refer to the 10 Northern tribes), and then there are the 2 remaining tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which are referred to as Judah. To the north and west of

Israel/Judah was the nation of Aram (referred to in the Old Testament as the Arameans), which Isaiah also refers to as Damascus (Aram's capital city). As you read chapter 7 it becomes clear that the King of Israel (the 10 northern tribes) has joined forces with the King of Aram to attack Judah, who is ruled by Ahaz. Ahaz is quaking in his boots at the thought of going to war against these two allied nations. God sends Isaiah to reassure Ahaz that God will protect Judah. Look at verse 4. God refers to the Kings of Israel and Aram as "two smoldering stubs of firewood," meaning that both of these kingdoms are on their last legs. In fact it would not be long before the Assyrians would completely crush both of these kingdoms.

As part of God's message spoken through Isaiah, God offers to give Ahaz a sign that what Isaiah is telling him is true, but in his pride Ahaz refuses God's offer. Ahaz's comment about not putting God to the test sounds very good and very religious, but what it really reveals is that Ahaz did not want to take God at his word. He didn't want to have to believe in God's promises. But through Isaiah, God gives Ahaz a sign anyway. The sign is found in verses 14 and 15, and it is that by the time a virgin gives birth to son these two kingdoms that are terrorizing Ahaz will be destroyed. It is right for us to think about these words applying to Jesus (we'll get to that in a moment), but we also need to understand that they applied to the events during Ahaz and Isaiah's lives as well. Isaiah spoke these words shortly after his first wife had died, and he was engaged to be married to young girl who at the time was still a virgin. In short, God's message spoken through Isaiah was that by the time Isaiah's future wife gave birth to a son, these two kingdoms would fall.

That was the immediate context of Isaiah's prophecy, but as we read Matthew's Gospel, we find that these words of Isaiah also referred to the coming of Jesus.

Matthew 1:20-23 *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ 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." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us."*

Jesus was born of a virgin, because it was the only way God could be with us (Immanuel). When Jesus was born, God moved into our world and lived right beside us—experiencing everything we experience, yet never sinning. The only way this could happen was through the miracle of the virgin birth. Because Jesus had a human mother, he could be human, just like us, but being conceived by the Holy Spirit means that he would be born without a sinful nature.

October 5 – Isaiah 9: 1 – 7

Verse 1 of today's reading refers to Naphtali, and Zebulun, which were two northern most tribes of Israel, and when the Assyrians attacked Israel they were the first tribes to suffer. But look at the rest of verse 1. These two tribes which were located in the region of Lake Galilee would also one day be honored by God. Jesus' ministry began along the shores of Lake Galilee.

Matthew 4:12-25 *When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. ¹³ Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali-- ¹⁴ to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: ¹⁵ "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- ¹⁶ the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." ¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." ¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. ²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.*

Verses 5, 6, and 7 from today's reading are very familiar verses that point directly to the coming of Jesus. The words "wonderful counselor" point us to the fact that Jesus, the coming Messiah, would be a wondrous strategist, who would orchestrate an amazing victory for his people. Through the cross Jesus accomplished an amazing victory over Satan, sin and death. The words "Mighty God" literally mean God is a warrior, and Jesus is our great warrior who defeats all our enemies. In Isaiah's time kings were referred as the father of the land, because it was their responsibility to care for and defend their people, so the words "Everlasting Father" point us to Jesus our great king, who rules over not only our lives, but all of creation. Finally, the words "Prince of Peace" remind us that Jesus came so that we could have peace with each other, but most especially with God.

Ephesians 2:13-17 *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.*

October 6 – Isaiah 11: 1 – 12

In today's reading, we once again hear of Isaiah referring to the coming Messiah as the Branch of Jesse. Jesse was the father of David, and in 2 Samuel 7, God promised David that the great king, the Messiah, would come from his family lineage. But here is the problem, earlier in Isaiah, Isaiah prophesied that Judah, David's family line was about to be defeated and sent into exile by God, because of their unfaithfulness. In other words, it seemed as if the tree of Jesse, David's family was about to be cut down. But what does Isaiah say next in verse 1? A shoot will grow out of the stump, and become a branch that finally bears fruit. Jesus is that shoot, that branch. In the verses that follow, Isaiah tells us that this shoot, will be filled with wisdom and the knowledge and power of the Lord, therefore, he will judge wisely and fairly. He won't judge based merely on the way things seem or on outward appearances, but instead he will judge with righteousness. He will take up the cause of the poor and the oppressed,

Luke 7:20-22 *When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'" ²¹ At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. ²² So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.*

and he will strike down the wicked.

Revelation 6:15 - 7:1 *Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"*

Sometimes from an earthly perspective, it seems like evil is still winning; the poor and downtrodden continue to be oppressed and those who do the oppressing never seemed to be called to account. But the great hope

(unfilled future certainty) of the Gospel is that one day everything will get turned upside down. That day will be a truly remarkable day, when the wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat. In that day the poor in spirit will truly inherit the Kingdom of Heaven and those who have oppressed them will be called to account. In that day peace will cover the entire earth, and the “Root of Jesse” will stand as a banner—a rallying point for the nations to enter his glorious rest. We eagerly await that day—Come quickly Lord Jesus, Come!

October 7 – Isaiah 28: 16; 1 Peter 2: 4 – 8

In the days when these verses were written, the cornerstone of a building was the stone that everything else rested on and was aligned with. It was the largest stone in the structure and set the foundation in place and therefore in a sense supported the whole structure. Isaiah 28: 16 is a picture of the coming Messiah, and Peter quotes from it to show us that Jesus is that precious cornerstone. Stop and think for a moment how true this picture is of Jesus. He is the one that everything we believe is built on. He is the one who holds everything together.

Ephesians 2:19-22 *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

If you could imagine a building site, where a building was being built out of stone, any stones that were rejected for use in the building and left lying on the ground would become hazards for the builders to trip over. In the words that Peter wrote, Peter makes it clear that we only have two choices when it comes to Jesus. We either reject him as worthless, and he becomes one of those stones that trips us up, or we build our lives on him as the precious and chief cornerstone. Jesus is either everything or he is nothing. So which is Jesus for you? Is Jesus always in your way, or is he the stone that you are building your life on? Are you really trusting in Christ and putting all your weight on him, or is he just off to the side in a corner of your life?

John 15:1-5 *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

October 8 – Isaiah 35: 1 – 10

As Isaiah spoke these words on behalf of God, Israel (the 10 northern tribes) had already been taken into exile by the Assyrians, and Judah was teetering on the brink of being exiled. Through Isaiah, God spoke of a future hope to the people of Israel. As bad as things were and as bad as things were yet to be for them, a time was coming when the curse would be reversed. A time was coming when a new highway, the Highway of Holiness³⁷ would be laid so that people would be able to return to Zion (the Holy City—Jerusalem) and enter it with joyous songs. When would this day come? It would be when the Messiah came. That was the great hope of those who were being exiled. It is the hope that people were still living in when Jesus was born. Even though the Israelites had been allowed to return to the Holy City of Jerusalem, they still had not seen what God had told them they would see here in Isaiah 35. But look at what God told them would be a sign that the great day of the Messiah had finally come. It is in verses 5 and 6. The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk, the speechless will speak, and streams will flow in desert wastelands. Now stop and think of those very things in terms of what Jesus said and did while he was here on earth.

Matthew 12:22-23 *Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. ²³ All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"*

Matthew 11:2-5 *When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples ³ to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" ⁴ Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.*

John 7:37-41 *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. ⁴⁰ On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet." ⁴¹ Others said, "He is the Christ."*

Jesus is the Messiah that God was pointing to in the Book of Isaiah. Jesus is the Highway of Holiness. Jesus is the means by which we enter the true Holy City, the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:2-8 *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³*

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." ⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."