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Isaiah 9:1-4 Page 1

Psalms 27:1-9 Page 2

1 Corinthians 1:10-18 Page 9

Matthew 4:12-25 Page18

Isaiah chapter 9

New International Version

1 Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan--

2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. **3** You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. **4** For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor

Psalm chapter 27

New International Version

1 Of David. The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life-- of whom shall I be afraid? **2** When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall.

3 Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident. **4** One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

5 For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

6 Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD. **7** Hear my voice when I call, LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. **8** My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek. **9** Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior. **10** Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. **11** Teach me your way, LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

12 Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, spouting malicious accusations. **13** I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. **14** Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

Context Summary

Psalm 27:1–6 demonstrates David's confidence in the Lord. He trusts God will protect him from his enemies and restore him to Jerusalem, where he will offer sacrifices. Psalm 22:8–26 is a parallel passage. It's possible David wrote this psalm when he was in the Negev, as a fugitive from King Saul, or during the violent rebellion of his son, Absalom. In the second half of this psalm, David pleads with God for the very deliverance he seems assured of in the first half—demonstrating that "knowing" not to be afraid does not make a person immune to the emotion of fear.

Psalm 27:1, NIV: Of David. The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life-- of whom shall I be afraid?

What does Psalm 27:1 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

The Lord is David's light, salvation, and stronghold. Each of these terms has significance in Hebrew thinking.

Light is a common metaphor in the Bible for knowledge, truth, and goodness. This was the ultimate ideal of the people of Israel, much as ancient Greeks valued *knowledge*, or Romans valued *glory*, and modern Americans speak of *freedom*. As his light, the Lord was the source of David's joy, understanding, and life.

As his salvation, the Lord was David's deliverer from his enemies. To be "saved" is to be rescued from something. Though David was a warrior, even in his own successes he never forgot that it was ultimately God who gave him victory.

The word "stronghold" implies a place of security and safety. The Hebrew term is *mā'oz*, which can also be translated as a "refuge," or even as a "harbor." The Lord was like a fortress that kept David safe.

As David thinks about the Lord filling these roles, he recognizes he has no reason to fear anyone. Like David, we have no reason to fear, because the Lord keeps us safe. The apostle Paul affirmed that "God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7). It has been observed that there are enough exhortations in the Bible to "fear not" that we can assign a unique one to every day of the year.

As David shows later in the psalm, "knowing" that one ought not be afraid does not mean one will never actually experience fear. His pleas beginning in verse 7 are those of someone who trusts God to assuage the very human fear he is feeling.

Psalm 27:2, NIV: When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall.

What does Psalm 27:2 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

David expresses confidence that his enemies will not succeed. If they try to attack and destroy him, David is sure they will fail. In fact, he is certain they will fail. By identifying his foes as "evildoers," David indicates they are not just his enemies but God's enemies as well. It is certain, therefore, that they will stumble and fall.

David lived out that level of assurance when he engaged Goliath in combat. Goliath thought he would give David's flesh to the birds and wild animals, but David told Goliath that the Lord would deliver him into his hand, and David would give the Philistines' dead bodies to the birds and wild animals (1 Samuel 17:44–46). The apostle John realized our enemies—Satan and his followers—want to destroy believers, but he encouraged us to rely on the Lord for victory. He wrote, "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in [the evil world system]" (1 John 4:4).

Psalm 27:3, NIV: Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.

What does Psalm 27:3 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

This creates an interesting contrast with a later statement in this psalm, where David pleads with God not to forsake him (Psalm 27:9). The first verses of this psalm present the idea that David has no reason to fear, thanks to what he knows of God. Questions such as "of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1) are more statements than inquiries. David is expressing the fact that he has no *reason* to fear—but that does not mean he is literally immune to anxiety.

Faith, as expressed in the Bible, is trust in the face of uncertainty. David's faith in the Lord as his light, salvation, and stronghold would not lag even if an army laid siege around him. His confidence remained firm even if an enemy should declare war against him. In moments of emotion, he would cry out to God (Psalm 22:1; 27:12), but not from a place of despair.

An incident from the life of Elisha shows how capable the Lord is to protect His followers. Elisha warned the king of Israel about where the Syrian army planned to be, so the king of Syria plotted to destroy Elisha. He sent a great army by night to surround the city of Dothan, where Elisha and his servant were staying. In the morning, Elisha asked the Lord to open his servant's eyes that he might see how the Lord would protect them. When the Lord opened the servant's eyes, the servant saw horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (see 2 Kings 6:8–17). Sometimes, we may feel surrounded by threatening circumstances, but the Lord surrounds us with His grace that is sufficient for every crisis (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Psalm 27:4, NIV: One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

What does Psalm 27:4 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

David's top priority in life was his relationship with the Lord. Although he was in the wilderness seeking refuge from his enemies, David's heart was in the tabernacle seeking the beauty of God. He longed to return to the tabernacle and spend the rest of his life in worship. Sometimes trouble drives us closer to the Lord and makes us more desirous of worshiping Him in the fellowship of other believers.

The prophet Jonah realized that when he was in the belly of the great fish his life was fainting away. And yet, he remembered the Lord and prayed to Him (Jonah 2:7). The Lord answered Jonah's prayer and delivered him from the great fish, depositing him safely on shore (Jonah 2:10). The believers to whom the book of Hebrews was addressed were tempted to faint under persecution. So the writer exhorted them to cling to faith "without wavering" and to "stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another" (Hebrews 10:23–25).

Psalm 27:5, NIV: For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

What does Psalm 27:5 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

The center of worship in Israel, during the time of David, was still a movable tabernacle: God's house was still a tent. Even so, this location was sometimes called a "temple" (1 Samuel 1:9). David's son Solomon built the first permanent sanctuary which was a true "temple" of God, but David rightly considered the tabernacle the equivalent of God's protection. He would feel safe in the tabernacle. His enemies would not be able to reach him there.

In David's time a host who welcomed a visitor into his tent accepted the responsibility to keep the visitor safe. His tent served as a stronghold (Psalm 27:1) for the visitor. David thought of the Lord as his protector under the cover of the Lord's tent, the tabernacle. Believers today are safe in Christ, who "tabernacled" among men (John 1:14). He said, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28). Our chief enemy, the Devil, would love to pry us from our Savior's hand and destroy us, but he faces an impossible task!

Psalm 27:6, NIV: Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.

What does Psalm 27:6 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Confidence that he will triumph over all his enemies does not inspire David to take credit for victory. Instead, he would joyfully offer sacrifices to the Lord in the tabernacle and sing to the Lord. Likely, the sacrifices would be thank offerings.

Such joyful celebration had marked the occasion when David retrieved the ark of the covenant from the Philistines. He brought it to Jerusalem "with rejoicing" (2 Samuel 6:12). He "danced before the LORD with all his might" (2 Samuel 6:14). "David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn" (2 Samuel 6:15).

The Lord Jesus promised to be with us always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). The apostle Paul reminded the Philippians that "the Lord is at

hand" (Philippians 4:5). Hebrews 13:5 gives us a promise from the Lord: "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Knowing the Lord is present with every believer always and everywhere should cause us to rejoice greatly with thanksgiving. It also gives us truth to cling to when circumstances cause us anxiety (Psalm 27:7–9).

Psalm 27:7, NIV: Hear my voice when I call, LORD; be merciful to me and answer me.

What does Psalm 27:7 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

After expressing reasons to be fully confident in God's protection, David desperately pleads with the Lord to answer his prayer. Perhaps at this time he saw the enemy bearing down on him. David's eyes may have been focused more on his enemy than on the Lord. He knew that he did not deserve an answer from the Lord. After all, he was a sinner like all other human beings. He simply appealed to the Lord to be gracious to him and answer him.

Rather than contradicting the first six verses of this psalm, David's prayer here is a natural reaction. He "knows" he has no reason to fear—but that knowledge will not make us immune to anxiety. Psalm 27, then, becomes a mixture of prayer and self-reassurance. David is expressing his need to God, stating both his trust and his weakness all at once. We see a father do something similar in Mark 9:24.

Similarly, we do not deserve an answer to our prayers, but the Lord is gracious, He provides what we do not deserve. The writer to the Hebrews implores us to draw near to the throne of grace so that "we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). In the midst of a sudden violent storm on the Sea of Galilee, Peter stepped out of a boat at the command of Jesus. He began to walk on the waves toward Christ. But soon Peter took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the stormy wind. That's when he began to sink. But like David who prayed desperately for the Lord to be gracious to him, Peter desperately cried out to the Lord, "Lord, save me" (Matthew 14:30). The Lord is gracious, and He answers desperate prayers!

Psalm 27:8, NIV: My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, LORD, I will seek.

What does Psalm 27:8 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

David knew the Lord wanted him to seek His face. In fact, this is God's desire for all people: the word translated "seek" from the original Hebrew of this verse is addressed to a group of people, not just one person.

To "seek God's face" is to strongly desire His presence and blessing. David responded to the Lord's invitation wholeheartedly. Perhaps, as David wrote Psalm 27, he recalled the Lord's words in Deuteronomy 4:29, 31: "You will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul...For the LORD your God is a merciful God, He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them."

In Jeremiah 29:13 the Lord promises: "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." Our prayers for an awareness of the Lord's presence and blessings must never be halfhearted or complacent. We must pray fervently with the whole heart and in faith (James 1:5–8; 5:16).

Psalm 27:9, NIV: Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior.

What does Psalm 27:9 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

When God "hides His face" from us, it means He is displeased. The imagery is of a parent turning to look somewhere else when a child is disrespectful or rude. David did not want the Lord to be displeased with him. He knew he was a sinner who did not deserve the Lord's presence and blessings. Because of his sinful condition, he knew he deserved for the Lord to reject him in anger. Although the Lord had anointed David to be king over all Israel, David humbly referred to himself as the Lord's servant.

Psalm 51:17 assures us that the sacrifices the Lord accepts are a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart. Faced with overwhelming opposition, David's spirit was broken before the Lord and his heart was broken and contrite. He recalled that God had helped in the past and urged Him not to abandon him now. He addressed his prayer to the God of his salvation. He recognized that only God could deliver him in his time of crisis.

This verse shows both sides of David's faith when compared to Psalm 27:3. David "knows" that God is with him, and yet he still experiences human fears and anxieties. His response to those emotions is not panic, or despair, but a trusting appeal to the Lord.

1 Corinthians chapter 1

10 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. **11** My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. **12** What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ.' **13** Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? **14** I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, **15** so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. **16** (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) **17** For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel--not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Context Summary

First Corinthians 1:10–17 is about Christian unity. After giving thanks to God for the Corinthians and their sure place with Him in eternity, Paul addresses the way they have divided themselves into factions based on which Christian teacher they follow. Paul urges them to stop and be unified in and around Christ. After all, Christ is not divided. They were not baptized in the name of Paul, though he baptized a few of them. Christ did not send Paul to baptize, but to preach the

gospel. Paul will not risk emptying the cross of its power by preaching with eloquent words.

1 Corinthians 1:10, NIV: I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:10 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul has laid a firm foundation for his letter in two things. First, he had zero doubts that the Christians in Corinth were truly saved, born-again believers, completely secure in Christ forever. Paul will not look at their sin and wrong thinking and challenge their salvation. Second, Paul has grounded their security in Christ Himself. He mentions the name of Christ here for the tenth time in the first ten verses. The Corinthians are accepted, because they are in Christ, and for no other reason.

In the previous verse, Paul wrote these believers have been called, each of them, into the fellowship of Christ. That requires, as people in Christ, they be in fellowship with each other. Now Paul comes to the first of many problems among the church in Corinth. Instead of being united because they are all in Christ, the Corinthians are divided.

Paul urges them in the name of Christ to agree with each other. He sets a high expectation for this church, and all Christian churches: *zero divisions*. Because each of them is in Christ, Paul insists that they can live in unity. This unity can, and must, reach the level of cooperative thinking and judgment on matters of critical importance.

Here, as in other passages (Romans 14), Paul will clarify: he is not demanding everyone in the church agree with whomever is in charge. Nor is he teaching that believers can *never disagree* about something. The standard here is not to reach perfect *conformity*, only that they must reach *unity*. Disagreement does not have to mean division.

Paul is setting up Christ as the standard for every thought and judgment. As every person conforms to Christ, they will come into alignment with each other. Differences of opinion will be secondary to fundamental agreement and brotherhood, through Christ. When Christians set up mere human beings as their standard, division is always the result, as the following verses will show.

1 Corinthians 1:11, NIV: My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:11 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Here Paul comes to his first purpose in writing to the Christians in Corinth. He has received unpleasant reports about them. Paul is writing from Ephesus, where he is living and working. Some people have come to Ephesus who are familiar with what is going on among the Christians in Corinth.

Paul describes his source as "Chloe's people," suggesting the Corinthians will know exactly who he is talking about. We don't have any other information about who Chloe or her people are. This group may have been relatives, friends, or servants of Chloe. They may have been sent by her to give this report to Paul or they may simply have been in town and mentioned to Paul what they knew about the church in Corinth. Perhaps Chloe, herself, was a member of the Corinthian congregation. We may speculate but cannot say for sure.

What "Chloe's people" reported deeply troubles Paul. After all, he led many of these people to Christ and helped to establish this church, staying for over a year and a half with them (Acts 18:1–17). He cares about the believers in Corinth. According to this news, instead of being unified in the fellowship of Christ together, there is quarreling among them.

The English word "quarreling" doesn't sound especially bad to modern ears. But the original Greek word, *eris*, refers to a hot dispute: a fiery, emotional disagreement. In Greek mythology, *Eris* was the name of the goddess of discord, responsible for instigating feuds, bickering, and strife. Paul lists this relationship-destroying "quarreling" in many letters alongside with other terrible relationship sins (Romans 1:29; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20; 1 Timothy 6:4).

1 Corinthians 1:12, NIV: What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ

What does 1 Corinthians 1:12 mean? [\[↑ See verse text ↑\]](#)

Paul has revealed his first reason for writing to the Christians in Corinth. He has received a troubling report that they are engaged in "quarreling." The term Paul uses here is one associated with deep, heated strife and emotional bickering: *eris*, which was also the name of the Greek goddess of discord. Instead of being united in Christ, as is the expectation for all churches, the Corinthians were hotly divided.

Here we learn the source of their conflict. Different factions within the church have apparently aligned themselves with one of at least four different teachers. This passage lists Paul, Apollos, Cephas—Peter—and Christ. There might have been more, and Paul is simply listing these for the sake of example. Part of what's implied here is that followers of these factions have aligned themselves *against* the other leaders and those who follow them.

Apollos is a somewhat mysterious figure in the early church. He was an Alexandrian Jew who became well known for his eloquent speaking, his knowledge of the Scriptures, and his bold teaching. When they saw that Apollos's knowledge was incomplete, Paul's friends and co-workers Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and helped him to better understand Christianity. He later traveled to Corinth with recommendation letters from the Christians in Ephesus (Acts 18:24–19:1).

Apollos is not known to have worked directly with Paul, but is not shown to have worked against him, either. He seems to have been a talented, independent Christian teacher empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 18:25).

Cephas is another name for the apostle Peter (John 1:42). It's unclear if Peter ever came to Corinth himself. Some scholars speculate that devout Jews who had converted to Christianity may have been more comfortable aligning themselves with Peter's faithful Jewish roots.

The group that declared "I follow Christ" would seem, on the surface, to be the one Paul would give praise to. He does not do so outright, suggesting that this faction may have championed Christ in some distorted way.

1 Corinthians 1:13, NIV: Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?

What does 1 Corinthians 1:13 mean? [\[↑ See verse text ↑\]](#)

Paul has called out a source of hot conflict between the Christians living in Corinth. Instead of being united together, as God has called them to be, they have divided themselves into factions based on their loyalty to different leaders. Four are given, at least as examples of these groups: those claiming Paul, Apollos, Peter, and Christ.

At first glance, we may wonder how people could be so committed to just one Christian leader that they would fight with other believers over it. After all, didn't all of them teach the same message: Christ's gospel? Wouldn't one assume all of these leaders preached that salvation comes only by faith in Christ? Experience, however, shows how easy it is for human beings to lose perspective and divide over issues of personality, authority, and race.

We don't have any reason to assume that Apollos or Peter were encouraging this conflict. Nor do we see evidence they were building factions against other teachers. Paul certainly was not, as he makes clear in this and the following verses. In fact, Paul sounds both baffled and angry. Can Christ be divided into parts, he asks. In other words, isn't Christianity all about Jesus Christ, not some fallible human teacher? How can loyalty to one person's truthful teaching about Jesus cause those in Christ to declare opposition to other truthful teachers about Christ?

Paul immediately calls out any group which would say it is loyal to him and against the others. He pointedly and sarcastically asks if he was the one who was crucified to pay for their sin? Were they baptized in Paul's name? No, of course not. All Christians were baptized in the name of Jesus as a way of identifying themselves publicly with Him. Paul's remark is not only cutting, it is

telling: those who identify more with a human teacher than with Jesus should consider in whom they are truly trusting.

1 Corinthians 1:14, NIV: I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius,

What does 1 Corinthians 1:14 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

In the previous verse, Paul expressed his dismay that the Corinthian Christians could divide themselves against each other based on which of the prominent Christian teachers they preferred. One group apparently declared their loyalty to him. To make the point that their focus should only be on Christ, Paul asked sarcastically if he had been crucified for them? Had they been baptized in his name (1 Corinthians 1:13)?

Paul clearly wants to eliminate himself from any position which only Christ should occupy in a believer's heart and mind.

Now Paul makes an aside about who he has baptized. Baptism was the standard practice of the early church that continues to this day. Jesus commanded it be done as He was leaving earth (Matthew 28:19). Believers are baptized to show publicly that they have identified themselves with Christ. Paul says he is grateful to God that he did not baptize very many of the Christians in Corinth. Paul always worked as part of a ministry team. His normal practice was to allow other disciples to perform baptisms. He remembers baptizing two men named Crispus and Gaius. He will recall one other household in the following verse.

He is glad, however, that he didn't personally baptize too many of them so that they would not be tempted to think that act conferred some special standing for them before God because Paul performed it. Baptism, as with every other meaningful act in Christianity, is about Christ.

This statement, as continued in the following verses, also helps us place baptism in the proper perspective. Paul puts great emphasis on his desire to see others saved (Romans 10:1), yet he explicitly says his mission is not to baptize (1 Corinthians 1:17). In other words, Paul himself establishes a clear difference

between being saved by grace and being baptized; removing the possibility that baptism is a necessary part of salvation (Titus 3:5).

1 Corinthians 1:15, NIV: so no one can say that you were baptized in my name.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:15 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul expressed in the previous verse that he was glad he did not baptize very many of the Christians in Corinth. He is deeply troubled that they have divided themselves into angry factions based on which well-known Christian teacher they are loyal to. Paul wants no part of that. If he had baptized more of them, his concern is that they might somehow think that his doing so would cause more of them to focus on him instead of on Christ.

He asked sarcastically in verse 13 if they were baptized in his name. Now he says emphatically that, since he baptized so few of them, nobody can wrongly say that they were baptized in his name.

Baptism is an important practice for Christians. When He was leaving earth after the resurrection, Jesus commanded His disciples to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). The idea that anyone would be baptized in the name of Paul was ridiculous heresy. That was Paul's point.

Parallel to that, this passage demonstrates that Paul did not consider baptism and salvation to be one and the same. Despite his deep desire to see others saved (Romans 10:1), Paul will explicitly say his mission was not to baptize (1 Corinthians 1:17), but to preach the gospel. While baptism's importance is clear, what's also clear is that the act of baptism does not impart salvation.

1 Corinthians 1:16, NIV: (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.)

What does 1 Corinthians 1:16 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul is making an aside from his main point that no Christian is legitimately baptized in the name of some teacher, preacher, or apostle. They are baptized in the name of Jesus, and all their loyalty and focus should be on Him. Instead, the believers in Corinth had divided into factions based on their loyalty to well-known Christian teachers.

Paul wrote in verse 14 that the only ones among them he had baptized were Crispus and Gaius. Now he recalls that he also baptized the household of Stephanas and allows that he may have baptized more people he is not remembering while he was with them in Corinth.

His point, though, remains that it does not matter whom he did or did not baptize because nobody was baptized in his name. All Christians are baptized in the name of Jesus. Further, this continues to emphasize that baptism is not part of our salvation. Paul's concern is the gospel, not a good work such as being baptized.

1 Corinthians 1:17, NIV: For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel--not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:17 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul was in the unique position as an apostle of having been sent by Christ Himself to complete a specific mission with his life. Christ sent Paul to preach the gospel, especially to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21).

Holding clearly to this mission meant that Paul also understood what Christ had not sent him to do. He was not called to baptize those who had believed the gospel. He was an evangelist and a missionary. He relied on others to baptize new believers and to participate directly in pastoring and teaching them.

We can take two things from this statement. First, Paul makes it crystal clear that baptism is not the gospel. In other words, baptism *is not required* for a person to

be saved. Paul's teaching of the gospel is utterly clear that faith in Christ is the only path to God's grace and eternal salvation from sin (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Second, Paul is not dismissing baptism as unnecessary. He expected that all who came to Christ would be baptized, and Christ commanded His followers to both make disciples and baptize all who believed (Matthew 28:19). Baptism is a step of obedience and a public declaration that a believer belongs to Christ.

Paul adds that Christ did not send him to preach the gospel with words of eloquent wisdom. To preach in this way, Paul says, risks emptying the cross of Christ of its power.

As a writer of course, Paul was often quite eloquent and certainly wise in his presentation of the gospel. One of the values of this era was *rhetoric*, speeches that were recognized for their brilliant use of words and phrasing to wow an audience and overwhelm a debate opponent on a given topic. We still use that term, today, in reference to the use of words intended to elicit certain responses.

Though Paul was clearly skillful in his use of words, he did not want to persuade anyone to come to faith in Christ because of dazzling wordplay. Instead, he wanted to present the gospel as clearly as possible and allow his listeners to be persuaded by the simple, compelling fact that the Son of God died to pay the penalty for their own sin. That powerful message should not require dazzling packaging to make an impact.

1 Corinthians 1:18, NIV: For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

What does 1 Corinthians 1:18 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul now begins to expand on his statement from the end of verse 17: that Christ did not send him to focus on words of eloquent wisdom as he preached the gospel, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. Paul divides the world into two groups of people: those who are perishing and those who are being saved. Those perishing are destined for eternity apart from God, while those being saved are destined for an eternity of sharing in God's glory.

To the first group—the perishing—the cross of Christ is "folly." The original Greek term used here is *mōria*, from the same root word forming English words such as *moron*. In blunt terms, Paul is saying that to the unsaved world, those who preach the gospel look like idiots. Broadly speaking, ungodly people think believers, and their faith, are stupid.

In Paul's day, the cross remained in widespread use by the Romans as a means of public execution. It was a symbol of shameful crimes and powerlessness before the irresistible Roman empire. The cross of Christ was not foolish in the Greek and Roman culture as a result of atheism. In truth, they believed in all kinds of gods and sorted them by the power they wielded over nature and humanity. The cross of Christ was foolish to the pagan culture because Jesus Christ was rejected by His own people and crucified like any other common criminal by the Roman machine.

From the Greek and Roman perspective, that was no kind of god to worship.

For those who are being saved, because of their faith in Christ, the cross is understood to be God's most powerful act. God's Son did not lose a fight with the Jewish leaders or the Roman government. He wasn't overpowered or outmatched (John 10:17–18; 18:6; Matthew 26:53). God the Father sacrificed His Son Jesus for human sin. Jesus, in spite of limitless power and authority, gave up His life to cover the sins of those who were perishing.

Those who trust in Christ understand that without that powerful act, we would be lost and without hope.

Matthew chapter 4

12 When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew 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 of the Sea, beyond 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 has come 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 send you out to fish for people.' **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, proclaiming 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.

Context Summary

Matthew 4:12–17 shows Jesus' travel and ministry in Capernaum, on the Sea of Galilee. This fulfills another ancient prophecy about the Messiah, found in Isaiah 9:1–2. Scriptures promised a great light would dawn in the region once occupied by the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, near the Sea of Galilee. Once thought of as "dark" because of its nearness to the Gentile nations and distance from Jerusalem, Galilee is the region in which the light of the Messiah will first shine brightly.

Matthew 4:12, [NIV](#): When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee.

What does Matthew 4:12 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

We don't know exactly how much time passed between Jesus' baptism by John and John's imprisonment by Herod Antipas. Antipas was one of the sons of the late king of Israel, Herod the Great. Jesus may have spent some time in the

southern region of Judea until Herod's arrest and then retreated to the northern region of Galilee to avoid trouble Himself.

Many Bible scholars argue that Jesus' public ministry began "officially" once John had been arrested. The time of the one who would prepare the way of the Lord had come to an end (John 3:28–30). It was time for the ministry of the Lord Himself to begin. Jesus' message was very similar to John's: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2; 4:17).

Matthew does not explicitly mention how Jesus felt about the arrest of John the Baptist. Presumably, this was a difficult experience: John was His relative (Luke 1:34–35) and God's chosen man to prepare Israel for His arrival.

Matthew 4:13, NIV: Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—

What does Matthew 4:13 mean? [[↑](#) [See verse text](#) [↑](#)]

Jesus has returned to His hometown of Nazareth, the place Joseph brought Him and His mother after returning from Egypt (Matthew 2:19–23). Jesus, once again, seems to have returned home to avoid the attention of the local authorities in the region of Judea. John the Baptist had been arrested and imprisoned there for preaching about the coming of the Messiah (Matthew 4:12).

This verse describes Jesus moving from Nazareth, a hill town in central Galilee and west of the Jordan River, to Capernaum, a fishing village on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee. Why did Jesus make the move? One reason may be that He could no longer stay in Nazareth. Luke's gospel describes a violent reaction at the synagogue in Nazareth after Jesus revealed His purpose and preached a harsh message there. The people rose up to kill Jesus, but He walked away.

Matthew points out that Jesus' new home in Capernaum lies within the ancient territory of the Israelite tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, given to them in the time of Joshua. In the following verses, Matthew will show how Jesus' residence there fulfills yet another prophecy about the Messiah.

Matthew 4:14, NIV: to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

What does Matthew 4:14 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

From the very beginning of his telling of the story of Jesus, Matthew has emphasized how circumstances of Jesus' life fulfill prophecies from Jewish Scriptures about the Messiah. He is intent on ensuring both Jews and Gentiles understand that Jesus was not simply a charismatic character. He did not merely attract a large following with the claim He was the Messiah. Matthew wants to establish that in every way, the claim that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ, is verified by the fulfillment of ancient prophecies.

Now Matthew points to another proof. This is a prophecy from Isaiah 9 about the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali. Jesus' move to the town of Capernaum, which lies in that region established during the time of Joshua, fulfills a very specific promise to those people from God.

Matthew 4:15, NIV: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—

What does Matthew 4:15 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Jesus is living in the region of Galilee in northern Israel. He has moved from his hometown of Nazareth in central Galilee to Capernaum, a fishing town on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 4:12–13). Matthew identifies this move as the fulfillment of a prophecy by Isaiah in Isaiah 9:1–2, a Scripture that points to the coming of the Messiah.

Capernaum and the region around it fell within the ancient boundaries of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. This land was given to them during the time of Joshua, after Israel had driven out the peoples of Palestine. Though the area may have had economic advantages, it was a long way from the religious and cultural centers of Jerusalem and Judea. In this way, it was thought to be "dark."

Matthew quotes Isaiah chapter 9, beginning in verse 1, to make that point. Scholars aren't exactly sure which translation of the original he is using, however. The ESV translates Isaiah 9:1 from the original language as follows:

"But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations."

Jesus moving to Galilee marked a significant fulfillment of this ancient Scripture, one that comes into clear view in the following verse.

Matthew 4:16, NIV: 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.'

What does Matthew 4:16 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Matthew is quoting from Isaiah 9:1–2 to show that Jesus' move to Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee was another fulfillment of prophecy about the Messiah. Capernaum and the region around it fell within the ancient boundaries of the Jewish tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali.

The people of that land were described as dwelling in darkness under the shadow of death during Isaiah's time. This was likely true for several reasons. First, their land was much closer to Gentile peoples and thus more vulnerable to attack. Second, the people living there were far away from the cultural and religious centers of Jerusalem and Judea. They had to travel some distance to reach the temple and the dwelling place of God.

Isaiah's prophecy, though, while writing about the coming of the Messiah, was that a light would dawn in their region. Matthew shows that Jesus is that light. He shines brightly in the land of darkness known then as "Galilee of the Gentiles." Instead of coming first to the "well lit" region of Judea, Christ comes first to the people living in darkness.

Isaiah 9 is often read around Christmas time. Though the prophecy was about the peoples of Zebulun and Naphtali, it is also true that the birth of Jesus brought light into a world of darkness. A few verses later, Isaiah 9:6 famously says of the Messiah, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall

be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Matthew 4:17, NIV: From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'

What does Matthew 4:17 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Matthew emphasizes in this verse that Jesus' ministry became entirely established after His move to Capernaum. He fully embraced the mission the Father had given to Him and began to preach to the people of Israel. Matthew shows that Jesus' ministry began in earnest after the arrest of John the Baptist.

Jesus' preaching ministry begins with the same essential message as John the Baptist: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near (Matthew 3:1–2). There is a difference, though. John preached that message to Israel as the one who prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah. He called the people to get ready, before the Messiah arrived and established the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus preached the same message, but He did so as the Messiah Himself. He called people to repent, but He would also call them to submit to and follow Him as the Son of God. Both John and Jesus emphasized that people cannot participate in God's kingdom without first repenting of their sins, changing the course of their lives to follow the way of Christ.

Matthew 4:18, NIV: 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.

What does Matthew 4:18 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Jesus has moved to Capernaum and has fully engaged in His ministry on earth as the Christ. Matthew now begins to introduce Jesus' disciples. Capernaum was a fishing town on the Sea of Galilee. It is not surprising that Jesus called several fishermen to follow Him there.

This was not the first time Jesus met Peter and Andrew. John, the apostle, tells that story in his book about Jesus (John 1:35–42). Andrew had been a former disciple of John the Baptist and was standing with John one day when John saw Jesus and called out, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Andrew understood Jesus to be the Messiah in that moment and went to get his brother Simon to meet Jesus. Jesus took one look at Simon and immediately changed his name to Cephas, which has passed through languages like Greek and English to become "Peter."

Jesus apparently did not call the brothers to follow Him at that first meeting. Peter and Andrew were from another fishing town on the Sea of Galilee, Bethsaida, but they had moved to Capernaum and were working as fishermen there. Jesus saw them as He was walking.

The brothers were in the midst of casting a net into the water. This method of fishing involves throwing out a circular net with lead sinkers attached to its edges. As it sinks, it traps the fish beneath and inside it. Such nets were about 20 feet across. The fact that the brothers were in the middle of casting a net makes their immediate obedience to Jesus' command in the following verses even more striking.

The Sea of Galilee, named after the region of Galilee, was also known as the "Lake of Gennesaret," as it is called by Luke (Luke 5:1).

Matthew 4:19, NIV: Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people

.'

What does Matthew 4:19 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Jesus had met Peter and Andrew before this moment (John 1:35–42). Andrew, at least, had spent a day with Him, and Jesus had changed Simon's name to Peter. Before introducing Peter to Jesus, Andrew told his brother, "We have found the Messiah."

Their understanding that Jesus was the long-promised Christ, the one who would save Israel and bring the kingdom of heaven to earth, may explain why they obeyed Jesus so quickly. Still, their faith and quick action is remarkable. Jesus had seen the brothers at work. They were in the middle of throwing a net into the

Sea of Galilee. Without any small talk or explanation—at least not as recorded in Matthew's account—Jesus commanded them: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

It was common in this day for a rabbi, or teacher, to gather students who would follow him in his daily life. They would be mentored by him, learning both through his words and through observing his daily interactions and choices. Jesus' call to younger men to follow Him in this way was not a foreign concept. Many rabbis and teachers had disciples. Andrew and Peter would have understood the role Jesus was calling them to fill.

The idea of fishing for men may have been strange, however. Peter and Andrew were expert fishermen. In one sentence, Jesus was already helping them understand the mission He would give to them.

Matthew 4:20, NIV: At once they left their nets and followed him.

What does Matthew 4:20 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Matthew reports that Peter and Andrew did not hesitate for a moment. Andrew, at least, had already served as a disciple under John the Baptist. The brothers believed Jesus to be the Messiah, the promised Christ who would bring the kingdom of heaven to earth. They understood who Jesus was and the role He was giving them as trainees under His leadership.

They apparently did not even pack up their work. They left their nets behind and immediately began to follow Jesus, demonstrating full commitment to whatever path He would lead them on. Their faith in Jesus is remarkable, though they did not yet have any idea what they were getting into.

Some of the men's willingness to immediately follow Jesus, here, is explained by their earlier encounter with Christ (John 1:35–42). This is not a stranger, it's someone they already know, and have good reason to want to follow.

Matthew 4:21, NIV: 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,

What does Matthew 4:21 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Matthew is describing how Jesus gathered His team of disciples. After calling the brothers Andrew and Peter to follow Him, they immediately left behind their nets —and their careers—to become disciples of the man they believed to be the Messiah.

Now Jesus continues along the shore of the Sea of Galilee in or near Capernaum. He sees another pair of brothers at their work as fishermen. These two, James and John, are working in a boat with their father Zebedee. The boat is large enough to hold several people. It may have been the kind large enough to hold as many as 15 men. With larger boats, fishermen could capture and haul more fish, increasing their profits.

James and John and their father were mending the big, circular fishing nets they used to catch and haul in the fish. If this was morning, they may have just finished a night of fishing. Jesus calls the brothers to follow Him: to be His disciples. It is likely that John had met Jesus before (John 1:35–39), though Matthew doesn't say so explicitly.

Matthew 4:22, NIV: and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

What does Matthew 4:22 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Jesus is gathering His disciples, the twelve men He will train to become fishers of men (Matthew 4:19). So far, he has called two brothers to follow Him. Andrew and Peter did so immediately, leaving their fishing nets and careers behind them (Matthew 4:18–19).

Now Jesus has called two more brothers. James and John were working in a fishing boat with their father, mending fishing nets. They also immediately leave the boat and their father behind to begin the full-time work of being Jesus' disciples. It is likely they knew who Jesus was (John 1:35–39) and believed Him to be the Messiah, as did Andrew and Peter.

James and John appear to leave behind even more than Andrew and Peter, however. They leave behind active careers, but also walk away from family and a successful family business. Becoming Jesus' disciple is immediately costly for them, but they do not hesitate.

Mark's gospel adds the detail that James and John left their father with the hired servants (Mark 1:20); the brothers did not leave their father destitute, helpless, or unable to complete his own work.

Matthew 4:23, NIV: Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

What does Matthew 4:23 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Matthew has described how Jesus added four disciples to His team, and He will introduce others later in his book. Now, though, Matthew dives into the content of Jesus' ministry: what He did, how He did it, and why.

Jesus' earliest ministry remained focused on Galilee, where He lived in the northern region of Israel. Scholars suggest there were 200 or more villages and towns located in the region of Galilee. The population may have been upwards of 300,000 people.

Many towns had their own Jewish synagogue. This would have been used as a local gathering and worship center apart from the main temple in Jerusalem. Ruins of synagogues have been found in Israel and other places in the ancient world with large Jewish populations. It was common for worship in the synagogue to include preaching from various rabbis who wished to speak. This gave Jesus, and later Paul, a natural way to introduce Himself and His message in a new community. Jesus and His disciples traveled from place to place, likely

keeping an exhausting schedule. Jesus' message everywhere He went was the "gospel of the kingdom." "Gospel" means "good news," and that good news was that God was bringing the kingdom of heaven to earth.

Jesus did not stop at preaching, however. He verified His claim to be the Messiah by supernaturally meeting the needs of the people. This included miraculously healing diseases and afflictions of every kind. These blessings of healing and relief from suffering showed that Jesus really was the bringer of the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 4:24, NIV: 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.

What does Matthew 4:24 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

As Jesus traveled around Galilee with His disciples, He proclaimed the good news that the kingdom of heaven was near. As the promised Messiah, He demonstrated the truthfulness of His teaching by miraculously healing every kind of disease and affliction. In doing so, he was giving the people a glimpse into the kingdom of heaven itself, in which there is no disease or affliction (1 Corinthians 15:42–43; Revelation 21:4).

Not surprisingly, Jesus' ability to heal in this way began to make Him famous beyond the region of Galilee. Matthew shows here that He also became famous in Syria, to the north of Galilee. People traveled great distances from the north to bring to Jesus those who needed healing.

Those seeking Jesus' help included the sick, the diseased, and those in great pain, as well as people oppressed by demons, afflicted by seizures, and paralyzed. In the first century, there were unsolvable, or nearly unsolvable, health problems. Yet Jesus was able and willing to heal them all. In doing so, He revealed not only His power as Messiah, but His compassion, as well.

Matthew 4:25, NIV: Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

What does Matthew 4:25 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Jesus' teaching about the coming kingdom of heaven and His miraculous healings of every kind of disease and affliction quickly made Him famous. He remained in Galilee, but large crowds came to Him from all over the map. Matthew mentioned Syria to the north in the previous verse. Now he adds other regions. The Decapolis, or "ten cities," was a Roman and Gentile region south and east of the Sea of Galilee. Crowds came from Jerusalem and the region of Judea, but also from "beyond the Jordan." This phrase usually referred to the territory east of the Jordan River.

Matthew's statement that the crowds followed Him does not mean that all those people became committed disciples of Jesus. It simply means they literally followed Him from place to place. Their intent was to see the miracles He performed and to hear His teaching. Those who did so had the opportunity to hear the greatest sermon ever given, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1–2).