

**Proper 9
Cycle B
Revised**

2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10

There are some reasons to believe that the Judeans had a kingship prior to the time of Saul and David, a kingship located in the city of Hebron some 20 km south of Jerusalem. Long before David was even born, Hebron had been the city center of Judean life, standing at the crossroads of a major E-W road from Gaza and a N-S road from Arad. David had, successively, been the Philistine vassal-King of Ziklag (1 Samuel 27:6) and King of Judah (2 Samuel 2:4), but accession to the crown of Israel, including now the non-Judean tribes, makes David ruler of all the Hebrews in Palestine. Like the pharaoh, David now wore the twin crowns of a southern and northern kingdom.

Psalm 48

Researchers have called this somewhat cacophonous psalm many things, including an “eschatological psalm” (Gunkel), an “enthronement psalm” (Mowinckel), or a hymn to Zion (Kraus). Samuel Terrien recognized in it vestiges of a Canaanite hymn. Like the Apostrophe to Zion in the psalm scroll from Qumran Cave 11, the focus of Psalm 48 is squarely upon the city of Jerusalem and envisions God’s power only in terms of that city. Kraus’ classification, therefore, has great merit. Since we see the ideology of an eternal, inviolable, and blessed city of Jerusalem in Isaiah 1-39, the psalm is most likely pre-exilic, *i. e.* composed before the fall of the temple in 586 BCE.

OR

Ezekiel 2:1-7

Taken into captivity by the Babylonians in 597 BC, the prophet Ezekiel addressed the community of Israel from afar. In this part of his inaugural vision, Ezekiel saw the relationship between God and Israel in political terms, as a relationship between subjects and sovereign. According to this model, Israel had rebelled against God’s royal authority and might, indeed, not ever repent of its betrayal. In fairness, however, God sends prophets to warn the nation to return before bringing about its final destruction. See also Amos 3:7.

Psalm 123

This *community lament* may also be associated with pilgrimage since the psalmist refers to lifting up his eyes to God’s dwelling in Jerusalem as in the pilgrimage psalm of Psalm 121:1. Pilgrimage may also account for the general nature of the complaint. Instead of a prayer for salvation from specific enemies, the psalm refers rather vaguely to those who are proud and contemptuous as the enemies of Israel. This vagueness would make the psalm applicable to many situations of pilgrimage.

2 Corinthians 12:2-10

Paul’s opponents in Corinth built themselves up on the basis of their spiritual prowess, the ability to speak in tongues and prophesy, the receipt of visions and superior knowledge. Paul argues that he too has received all of these graces and, indeed, has had a vision of the heavenly world much

like that of the greats of antiquity. Actually, by Paul's time there was an entire literature describing the ascents of famous people like Moses, Job and Enoch into heaven. Paul surprisingly denies, though, that his personal experience, however impressive, does not qualify him as an apostle. Rather, it is his faithfulness in suffering that identifies him as worthy of the office. What exactly Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (verse 7) might have been remains unknown. Most believe it was some kind of chronic physical ailment, but that is not certain.

Mark 6:1-13

Verses 1-6 comprise an *apophthegm*, *i. e.* a story that has been built up out of a saying to preserve and even interpret that saying. The saying in question is the difficult saying about prophets in verse 4. The tradition has put the setting in Jesus' "hometown" without naming it because the word "hometown" (verse 1, Greek *patris*) because that is the word used in the saying of verse 4. Jesus's mother and siblings are mentioned in verse 3 because of the reference to "kin" and "house" in verse 4. Reference to Jesus as "son of Mary" in verse 3 is an insult that intimates that Jesus was illegitimate and underscores the enmity of Jesus' opponents in the synagogue. It was so remarkable that Mark claimed that Jesus *could not* do any great work in his hometown (verse 6) that Matthew changed the verse to tell us that Jesus *did not* do any great work there (Matthew 13:58).

Although Luke 9:1 and Matthew 10:1 have Jesus giving his students power over demons *and* over diseases; but in Mark, however, all diseases derive from demons because Mark uses the demons as representatives of the power of Satan and the underworld. In this reading, Jesus commissions his students (disciples) to continue and expand Jesus' own mission against the satanic forces. Reference to curing diseases by anointing with oil (Mark 6:13) derives from the widespread bathing practices of the Mediterranean world. The ancients believed this protective benefit of oil might extend to the curing of disease as well as the soothing of the skin.

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