

Bible Challenge 2017

Week 13: March 26-April 1

Prayers (Exodus 15; Numbers 23-24)

We enter into the first break this year from the book of Psalms, reminding us that there are also songs and prayers found throughout the Old Testament (and shorter ones in the New Testament as well).

Exodus 15 contains the antiphonal song sung by the Israelites after the Red Sea deliverance, Moses leading the men in singing and his sister Miriam, leading the women. It should be noted that the language of this chapter is found quoted and alluded to throughout the Bible as the Red Sea crossing is the most recalled event in Old Testament historical narrative. It is a song of deliverance and salvation, praise be to God. What is sad is that right after this great song of praise, we find that the next recorded event is the grumbling of the people over water.

Numbers 23 and 24 contain the prophetic words of a pagan prophet, Balaam. Yet, God took what was intended for evil and turned it for good as Balaam's intended curse became a blessing. It also became part of the prophesy of the coming Messiah when it speaks of a star coming out of Jacob (Jacob being the tribe from which Israel's kings were supposed to come).

Gospel (Matthew 17-18)

We go from the most significant Old Testament event (the Red Sea Crossing) to the most significant New Testament event — Jesus' transfiguration. The transfiguration sets itself up as a turning point in the Gospel narrative. One can argue that the events prior to the transfiguration are preparing the Apostles for this event and all those from the Transfiguration on have their focus on Jerusalem and the cross. Clearly, from this point on, Jesus speaks much more openly about his coming arrest and death.

Why is this event so significant? First, it is a revelation to Peter, James, and John of the fullness of the glory of Christ. Second, in connection with the first, it marks a change in the covenantal status of the people. In the Old Testament the warning was that man was not to look upon the face of God lest he die, hence the Holy of Holies in the Temple was kept behind curtains and only the High Priest could enter and then only once a year. Here, the Apostles are given permission to witness Christ on the mountain, and not be protected in the cleft of the rock (noting that Moses and Elijah also witnessed God's glory on a mountain, but were hidden). Third, it is meant as a kind of "sneak preview" of the end times when God's glory will no longer be veiled and we will be permitted to gaze on his greatness. It is a foretaste of what is to come.

Matthew 18 is important to make notice of as well. Here we are given instructions on how to go about reconciling with one another in the life of the church. In short, we are to confront the sinning brother or sister privately and in love. If they repent, wonderful. If they do not, then you repeat this, but with one or two other witnesses. Again, if that brother repents, then wonderful, but if not, then it goes to the church — in our case, to the Church Council. If Christians would practice this in love rather than grumbling about one another behind their backs, it is my conviction that relationships in the church would be healthier and the church would grow more mature.

Wisdom (Ecclesiastes 10-12)

We bring Ecclesiastes to a close this week, beginning with one of the more memorable illustrations in this book — "Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment stink." A more appropriate illustration of foolishness I cannot contrive. How often it is only the foolish things we do that is remembered, not the wise actions even if the wisdom far outweighs (in terms of quantity) that which is foolish. Ecclesiastes closes with the words that remind us that the end of the matter is to fear God and obey his commandments...that, Solomon tells us truly, is the whole duty of man.

History (Numbers 8-15)

As we work through the book of Numbers, we find some

further instructions for the priesthood, including their retirement from the worship at the temple at age 50. This did not mean that the priests sat around and were idle from that point on, but from that point on their role was that of a teacher to train younger priests who were coming into service (at age 25, though the age would later be lowered again to 20, though once established in the Promised Land it would return to 30 years of age).

Passover is celebrated, marking the second year of the people having exited from Egypt. Yet, by the time we arrive at chapter 11, the people start complaining about the Manna. They wanted meat. God brought quail this time, but with the quail he also brought a plague as a warning to the people against their complaining. How often God's people complain about heaven's food, preferring earth's food even though it might bring with it judgment.

What follows is more complaining. Moses' brother and sister (Aaron and Miriam) complain that he is getting more recognition and authority than they are getting. Later, when the spies bring back news of the Promised Land, they complain that the residents are too great for them to conquer. The people were so stirred up by this that they threatened to stone Joshua and Caleb for telling the truth, thus bringing on the judgment that none who left Egypt but those two men would actually live to see the people's entrance into the Promised Land. How restless God's people can become.

Our reading this week closes with more rules for the priests along with the execution of a Sabbath-breaker. It is one more reminder of the seriousness with which God handles the worship of his people. We are not to be careless and fickle as so many churches are in this day and age, but we are to approach it with gravity and purposefulness.

Prophecy (Isaiah 61-66)

Not only do we conclude Ecclesiastes this week, we conclude Isaiah and 1 Corinthians. Chapter 61 of Isaiah ought to be familiar to you as this is what Jesus reads from when he is in the Synagogue in his home town (Luke 4:18-19). Interestingly, in Jesus' hometown they try and stone him not for saying that this scripture is fulfilled in their hearing, but because he will not perform spectacles in their midst.

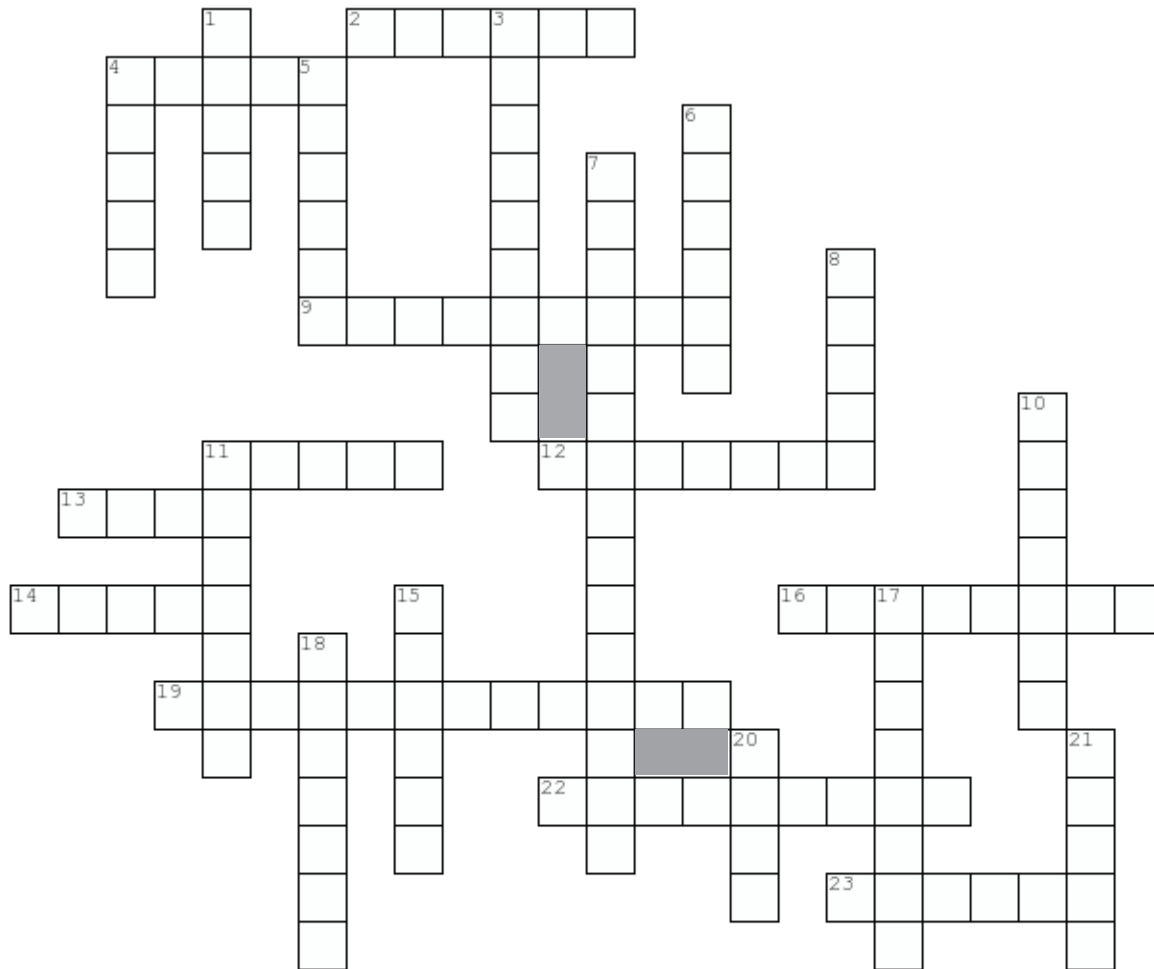
These chapters focus largely on the promises worked in the coming Messiah — the Year of the Lord's Favor (Jubilee) and the cleansing of those who are unclean. One of the great promises is that in the time following the Messiah, he will bring in the gentiles and some of them will become priests (Isaiah 66:21). Folks, that is you and me, believers in Jesus Christ. These words speak of us. So very cool!

Epistles (1 Corinthians 15-16)

In the light of the importance of Romans, I think that we sometimes miss the significance of the book of 1 Corinthians to our theology, particularly in light of this chapter whose focus is on the Resurrection. Paul goes into depth at first regarding the people who have been witnesses of the resurrected Christ (500 at one time!). If one were a lawyer, one would have an open and shut case if one could find 500 witnesses whose testimony corroborated with one another... it just does not happen that way in life, at least normally. For us as Christians, it is case evidence that supports our claims.

In addition, Paul details the importance of the resurrection for all believers. He insists that all of our witness and testimony is tied up in the resurrection. How often Christians fall into the trap of speaking about spending eternity in heaven with God. No, that is not the case. For the Christian, eternal life is not about heaven, but it is about the new creation...in particular, the new earth on which we will live. It is a physical resurrection to look forward to, not a spiritual one. Paul then closes with some parting words, travel plans, as well as greetings to friends in the church. His final statement, though, may sound a bit shocking. He states, that if anyone has no love for the Lord, "let him be accursed." Strong, but true words and words that are a bit hard on our contemporary "be politically correct" ears.

Week 13



Created with TheTeachersCorner.net [Crossword Puzzle Generator](http://www.TheTeachersCorner.net)

Across

2. This man was executed for gathering this on the Sabbath day.
4. This spy, along with Joshua, gave a faithful witness.
9. Paul plans to visit Corinth after he passes through here.
11. How old were Priests when they retired from active duty to mentoring and teaching younger priests?
12. In Christ, death is swallowed up in this.
13. The Lord will enter into judgment with this.
14. Only this disciple and Jesus were required to pay the Temple tax (indicating that the others were under 18).
16. This group of violent people are mentioned as being in the land (think Genesis 6).
19. The spies sent to Canaan brought back this fruit to show the people.
22. The earth is God's _____.
23. This crossing is the most cited event in the Old Testament (2 words).

Down

1. If you are a perfumer, you don't want dead _____ in your ointment.
3. Manna tasted much like the seed of this plant.
4. Whomever humbles himself like one of these will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.
5. This pagan priest prophesied of the coming Messiah.
6. This relative of Moses was punished with Leprosy for her rebellion.
7. This is the central event in the Gospel narratives that transitions toward the Passion.
8. The spies spied out Canaan for this many days.
10. The Year of the Lord's Favor is also called the Year of _____.
11. '_____ and keep his commandments' is the whole duty of man. (2 words)
15. If there is no resurrection _____ also is not resurrected.
17. In the first month of the second year the people were away from Egypt they practiced this.
18. How many Elders are appointed to aide Moses?
20. Paul sends Corinth greetings from the churches here.
21. Cast this on the waters and it will come back to you.