

Challenge 2014: Bible in a Year

Week 7: Numbers 16 — Deuteronomy 3 (February 9 — 15)

Summary:

Korah's rebellion is one that is cited again in the New Testament in Jude 11 as an example of people from within the congregation of the faithful who were following their own passions and not submitting to the command of God. It is a devastating judgment. Here, God consumes those seeking to overthrow Moses with fire and then opens the earth up and swallows their families. Even after the destruction of these wicked people, God sends a plague that kills over 14,000 people who grumbled at Moses and Aaron for the way God judged the people.

Even so, there is given to us a wonderful glimmer of hope, for we are reminded in Numbers 26:11 that the sons of Korah did not die. God would preserve these men in spite of the sin of their father. These sons would then be responsible for writing 11 Psalms — Moses only wrote one!

Chapter 17 includes a challenge to Aaron's leadership bringing about the budding of his staff -- something that will eventually be stored inside of the Ark of the Covenant along with an urn of Manna and the Ten Commandments (Hebrews 9:4). Chapter 18 changes gears and inserts in this context some guidelines for the priests and their purification. It is here, for example, where instructions are given for the priests (who live off of the tithes of the people) to also tithe to the High Priest to support his work.

In chapter 20 we probably have the most significant portion in the book of Numbers — Moses' sin. At the waters of Meribah, instead of commanding the rock to pour forth water, he doubted and struck it with his staff. It is for this doubt that Moses is not permitted to enter the Promised Land, though God will give him a glimpse. It is here that Miriam and Aaron would both pass away.

The Bronze serpent is also in this week's reading, an event that Jesus will look back to in John 3:14-15 and apply to himself. Chapters 22-24 contain my favorite encounter of Numbers — the account of Balaam and his talking donkey. Balaam was hired to curse the people, something that God will never allow to happen, but while chapter 24 ends with Balaam and Balak parting, but Numbers 31:16 and Revelation 2:14 point out that it was Balaam that taught Balak how to cause the men of Israel to stumble...the women...and that is what we find in chapter 25, bringing even more death upon the idolatrous people of Israel.

The final chapters of numbers may feel like a bunch of odds and ends thrown together, though one must remember that the tribes are on the move, though not directly. Joshua is chosen to succeed Moses, offerings specified for various festivals and celebrations, and a much suffered revenge on Midian, who had earlier seduced the young men into idolatry with their young women. Chapter 33 is a summary of 40 years of travel and 34 sets the boundaries for Israel — boundaries that are significantly larger than that which Israel actually would inhabit. In the end, the people end up on the plains of Moab, ready to enter the promised land.

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy, or "the second law," which is what its name means in Greek, is just that, a retelling of the law of God to the people. The second giving sets it apart only in that here we find more description and explanation of practical situations where these laws are to be applied. Many scholars argue that Deuteronomy forms a Constitution for the nation of Israel once it will be formed. It certainly contains the kind of covenantal structure that will shape later constitutions.

In principle, this book is structured around a series of sermons that Moses preaches to the people on the ten commandments. He begins, though, with a recap of the trip that God has led them on. This may seem a bit redundant as we have just read the story within the last week and have covered the whole account over just a few weeks, but remember, these people were just about all born in the wilderness and did not experience all of these events. Also, these events cover 40 years of history... that is a long time...and God calls us regularly to remember.

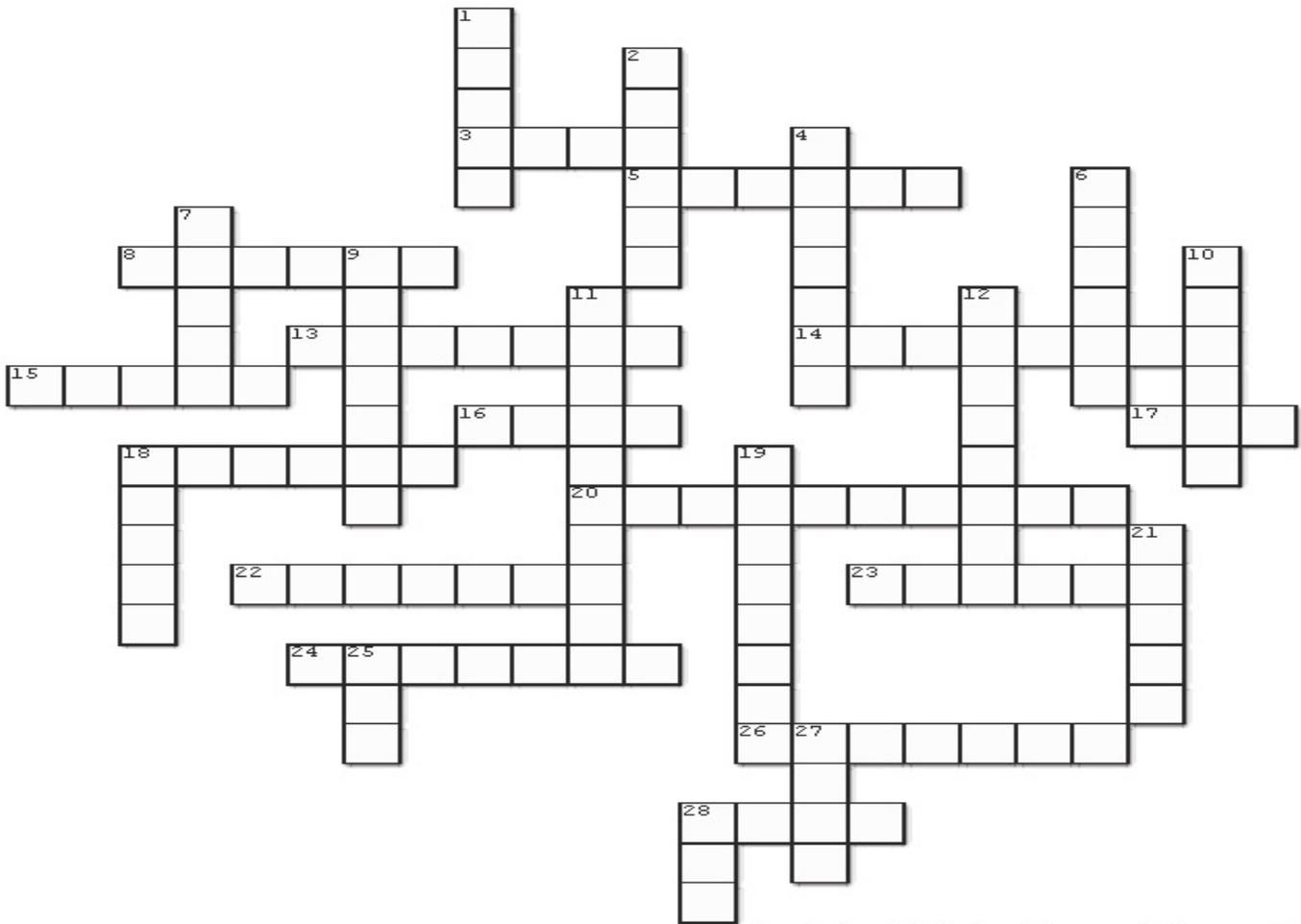
Deuteronomy 3 ends with Moses' reminder to the people of his own punishment for disobedience, a theme that will play out heavily in the sermons that Moses will preach here on the east banks of the Jordan. There is a promise though, that anticipates his death at the end of the book, and that is that God will allow him to view the promised land from the top of Mount Pisgah.

Chromatic Notes:

- In chapter 19 we have the cleansing instructions. Note, though, how the cleansing is done: hyssop is dipped in water and then sprinkled on the people needing to be cleansed. This is the basis of the reference in Psalm 51:7 as well as the purification ritual that would become Baptism in the New Testament.
- Remember, Edom is the nation that descended from Esau... making them all the more guilty for not letting the Israelites pass through.
- When I studied Hebrew in seminary, my professor used to point back to the account of Balaam and say: "If God can make a donkey speak Hebrew, you can learn to read it..."
- In Numbers 27 we are introduced to the Daughters of Zelophad, a man who died in the wilderness during Korah's rebellion. Notice that his daughters gain an inheritance in the land, something very unusual in the Hebrew culture.
- Numbers 35 addresses the Cities of Refuge where a manslayer can escape the Avenger of Blood by fleeing to. He had to stay until the death of the High Priest, whereupon he would be declared free. This is one more piece of symbolism that points to Jesus' death — the death of the High Priest so that we could be set free from our guilt.
- If you want to summarize Deuteronomy, you can do so with the theme of obedience to God in all things...sadly, much easier said than done.

Week 7: Numbers 16-Deuteronomy 3

Complete the crossword below



Created on TheTeachersCorner.net Crossword Maker

Across

3. God warns the Israelites that if they don't drive out the inhabitants of Canaan, they will be as barbs to their _____.
5. This was the first place where the people began to settle, still to the east of the river Jordan.
8. This was Balaam's talking mount.
13. This tribe was the only tribe allowed in the Tabernacle
14. This was the territory that the spies had spied out and the people feared to enter.
15. This went to the Levites to support them.
16. Mount Hor is on the edge of this territory.
17. The people of Ammon are descended from this nephew of Abraham.
18. On this person's advice, Balak tempted the people of Israel into immorality.
20. A murderer shall dwell in the city of refuge until the death of this individual (a title: 2 words).
22. The Israelites camped here after they set out from the Wilderness of Sin.
23. Moses' successor
24. This nutty fruit came from the staff of the High Priest.
26. When Israel complained in the wilderness, God sent them this fiery animal to bite at them...
28. This shall come out of Jacob, a prophesy of the Messiah.

Down

1. This honorable leader was the head of the tribe of Judah.
2. On this mountain Moses would overlook the promised land.
4. This was where Moses struck the rock.
6. Because of the people's sin, no person who came out of Egypt at this age or older was allowed to enter the promised land.
7. This person led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron causing him and his compatriots to be consumed by fire and others to be swallowed by the ground.
9. Who became High Priest upon Aaron's death?
10. This was used to sprinkle water during purification rituals.
11. He died but his daughters gained his inheritance.
12. On the first day of the seventh month these were to be blown as part of a holy convocation.
18. This man summoned Balaam to curse the Israelites.
19. This quick-thinking Levite ran through a wicked Israelite and Midianite woman with one spear thrust.
21. This person's staff budded.
25. Finish the quote: 'God is not a man that he should _____.'
27. Edom descended from this hairy person.
28. How many cities of Refuge were to be located in Israel?