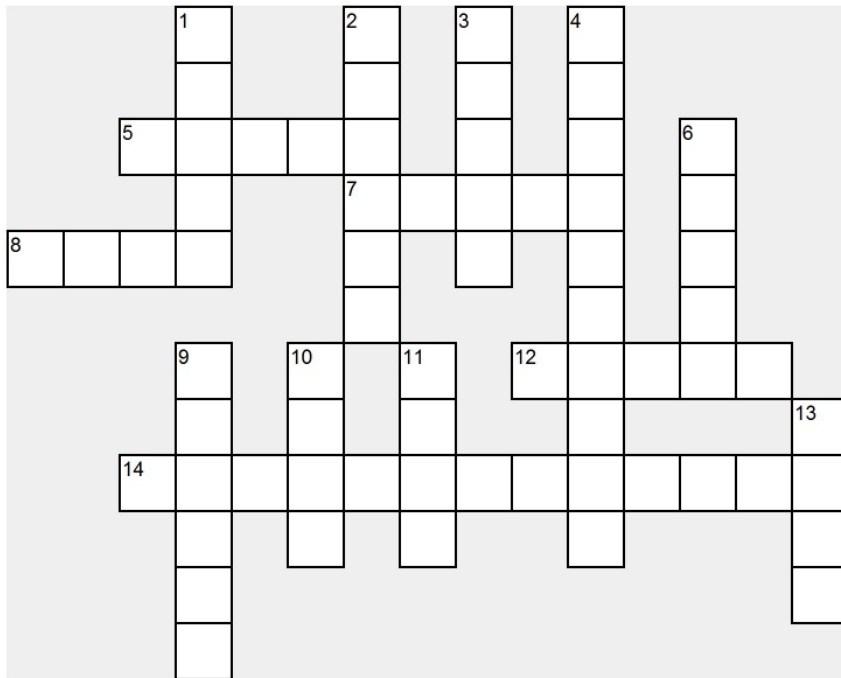


A Bible Crossword: Exodus, pt. 2

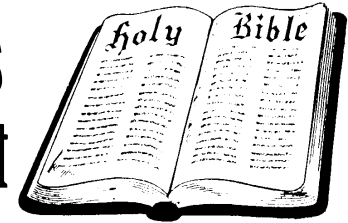


Across: 5. Ashes from the furnace became these on man and beast. 7. God promised to harden Pharaoh's to do mighty works in Egypt. 8. God would deliver Israel with a strong one. 12. Moses asked Pharaoh to let Israel hold one in the wilderness. 14. How Moses described his lips because Pharaoh would not heed him.

Down: 1. What the waters of Egypt were turned into. 2. God set apart this Israelite land where no flies swarmed. 3. The Israelites had to make bricks without this after Moses first spoke to Pharaoh. 4. A severe one struck the livestock of Egypt. 6. In the second plague, these hopped all over Egypt. 9. Pharaoh's magicians declared the third plague to be the _____ of God. 10. God sent this, mingled with fire, upon Egypt. 11. The dust of the land turned to this. 13. Pharaoh said that Moses request showed that Israel was this—they had too much free time.

—All answers found in Exodus 5-9, NKJV

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Set Your Face

When a Political candidate sets his or her sights on the White House, it involves desire, planning, and diligent effort. Though there are pitfalls and obstacles along the way, fierce determination, “setting one’s face toward Washington,” is the only way to get there. Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem. His mind was set. He had unwavering determination. He was not going to vie for political position; He was not going to earn His fortune; He was not going for earthly fame. He had a high and noble reason for going to Jerusalem. He had been there many times, but this time was different.

Jesus Set His Face to go to Jerusalem...to Die.

He was not going there for a vacation, not to see the sights, not even for a “holy pilgrimage,” Jesus was going to Jerusalem to endure a tortuous, agonizing death. He was going there because it was the Father’s will. “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent me” (John 6:38).

Long ago, when it was God’s will for Jesus to come to earth, He set his face toward earth! While here, how many times He must have said, “I must be about my Father’s business.” That “business” included being crucified for the sins of the world. To make it more personal, He set His face to die for you. He had boldly predicted what was going to happen at Jerusalem. “Now, Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again’” (Matthew 20:17-19).

As you read Luke's account, Jesus keeps pressing forward, day after day, knowing what awaited Him (Luke 13:33; 19:28). Jesus remained firm in His commitment and determination in spite of His disciples trying to discourage Him from doing so. When he announced to them that He was going to Jerusalem to be crucified, Peter was the first to say, "This shall not happen!" (Matthew 16:21-23). But Jesus was not about to let misguided disciples distract Him from His determined course. Jesus was determined in spite of the fact that some people, the Samaritans, rejected Him because He had set his face toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:53). Even though the majority rejected Him (John 1:11), it never swayed Him from doing the will of the Father. "Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." (Luke 9:51)

We, Too, Need to Set Our Face Toward Jerusalem

There's no need to face Jerusalem when we pray as they did in the Old Testament (Daniel 6:10; 2 Chronicles 6:34-35). There's no need to make a pilgrimage to the "holy city" since Jerusalem is no longer considered that by God (John 4:21). Oh, we can go there and see the sights spoken of in the Bible, but there is no inherent holiness obtained by so doing.

The New Testament speaks of a spiritual, heavenly Jerusalem that people come to when they become followers of Christ. "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:22-23). You don't become a part of the body of Christ, the church, a part of the spiritual, heavenly Jerusalem, Christian, by accident, or by birth. It takes fierce determination to make the good confession, to repent of sins, to be baptized into Christ, and walk in newness of life.

We Must Set Our Faces Toward the Heavenly City

Especially in the Book of Revelation, the final dwelling place of all God's faithful children, heaven, is described as the "New Jerusalem." "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of

My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name" (Revelation 3:12; 21:2; 21:10).

If we're ever going to make it to heaven, we're going to have to set our faces toward it. This is what patriarchs like Abraham did (Hebrews 11:10). Like so many before us, we need to "desire a better, that is, a heavenly country." "Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them" (Hebrews 11:16).

A Final Plea

Friends, don't set your face on this earth. Remember, we are strangers and pilgrims here. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland" (11:13-14). This world is the journey, not the destination! If you set your face toward heaven, like Jesus, you're certain to encounter opposition along the way. Like the Samaritans' attitude toward Jesus, not everyone will be happy with your decision to be a Christian, maybe those in your own family (Matthew 10:36). Set your face and fix your determination anyway! Like Jesus' disciples, sometimes the Lord's people have their minds set on earthly things (Matthew 16:23; Philippians 3:18-19). Don't allow others to discourage you. Set your face and press on.

May God help us to set our faces toward heaven. Let us say with Isaiah, "For the Lord God will help Me; therefore, I will not be disgraced; therefore, I have set My face like a flint. And I know that I will not be ashamed" (Isaiah 50:7). And let us say with Paul, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). Let us sing and mean it – "I have decided to follow Jesus. Though none go with me, I still will follow."

Set your face toward Jerusalem and ...keep on marching toward Zion!