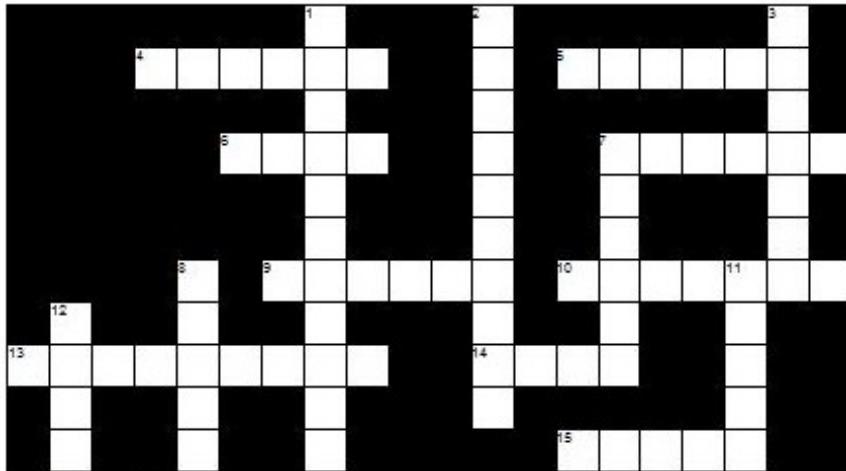


A Bible Crossword: Matthew, Part 2



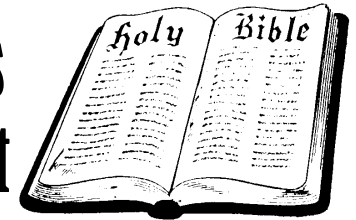
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Across: 4. Where you should lay up your treasure. 5. The Devil tempted Jesus to leap from the pinnacle of this. 6. The foundation of the wise man. 7. The Devil tempted Jesus to turn these to bread. 9. You can't serve God and this. 10. Don't sound one when doing charitable deeds. 13. Peter and Andrew's occupation. 14. Christians are like this, useless without flavor. 15. Give the person who demands your tunic this also.

Down: 1. These are blessed to be called sons of God. 2. Jesus was tempted here. 3. James and John's father. 7. The poor in this inherit the kingdom of heaven. 8. What we pray God will give us daily. 11. Don't try to remove a speck from your brother's eye with one of these in your eye. 12. Leave this by the altar and be reconciled to your brother.

—All answers can be found in Matthew, Chapters 4-7

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Old Enough To Compete

Controversy reared its ugly head again during the 2008 Beijing games when suspicions were raised about the eligibility of several members of the Chinese women's gymnastics team.

The issue in question is the appropriateness of the word *women's*. Several of the Chinese girls look a little young to be referred to as women. According to the current rules, gymnasts must turn 16 during the Olympic year to be eligible to compete. Though younger girls have greater flexibility and may potentially perform better in some events, they may also be at greater risk of injury.

Cheating in this area is nothing new. Associated Press writers Nancy Armour and John Leicester report that North Korea was barred from the 1993 world championships after FIG officials discovered Kim Gwang Suk, the gold medallist on uneven bars in 1991, was listed as 15 for three years in a row. Romania admitted in 2002 that several gymnasts' ages had been falsified, including Olympic medallists Gina Gogean and Alexandra Marinescu. Even China's own Yang Yun, a double bronze medallist in Sydney, said during an interview aired on state broadcaster China Central Television that she was 14 during the 2000 Games.

The minimum age for women's gymnastics has been

changed several times from 14 to 15 to 16, where it remains at the present. Those who compete early and are found to be under the minimum age limit lose their medals. So how old does one need to be?

The Spiritual Minimum

A similar question is raised concerning baptism. How old does one have to be for his or her baptism to be valid? Some, who were baptized at an early age, begin to ponder this question. Some, who were baptized or sprinkled as infants, begin to ponder this question. Was my baptism valid in the sight of God or do need to be baptized again?

The Scriptures do not give a minimum age for baptism. Instead, they give us information we can use to evaluate ourselves as individuals.

First, the Scriptures teach that only those who believe in Jesus may be baptized. As Philip was teaching the Ethiopian Eunuch, the latter said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36). Philip replied, “If you believe with all your heart, you may” (Acts 8:37).

An infant cannot believe, and therefore, cannot be legitimately baptized. A small child, one who understands something about the process of conversion but does not have the proper faith in the creator, cannot be legitimately baptized.

Second, the Scriptures teach that baptism must be accompanied by repentance. In Acts 2, when the Israelites present on the Day of Pentecost learned of their sin in crucifying Jesus, they asked, “What shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:37-38). Baptism is identified as the act of conversion in which God,

through the blood of Jesus, forgives our sins—sins for which we are repenting. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of action. Only one who has personally committed sin can repent.

In Romans 6:3-6, Paul discusses the nature and imagery behind baptism. He writes, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”

When one is baptized, one is following in the example of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus died physically. We die spiritually by sinning. Jesus was buried in a tomb. We are buried in baptism. Jesus rose from the dead physically. We rise from the dead spiritually. The old man of sin is crucified in baptism, and a new creature emerges (2 Cor. 5:17).

Baptizing an infant or child cannot be valid because they are not dead in sin. Sin is not inherited from parents or anyone else (Ezekiel 18:1-17). The infant has no sin, and the child is not yet accountable for his or her actions.

In the process of death, burial and resurrection, baptism is the burial. We do not bury people alive when they still live physically. Can we legitimately baptize infants and children, burying them alive when they still live spiritually? No.