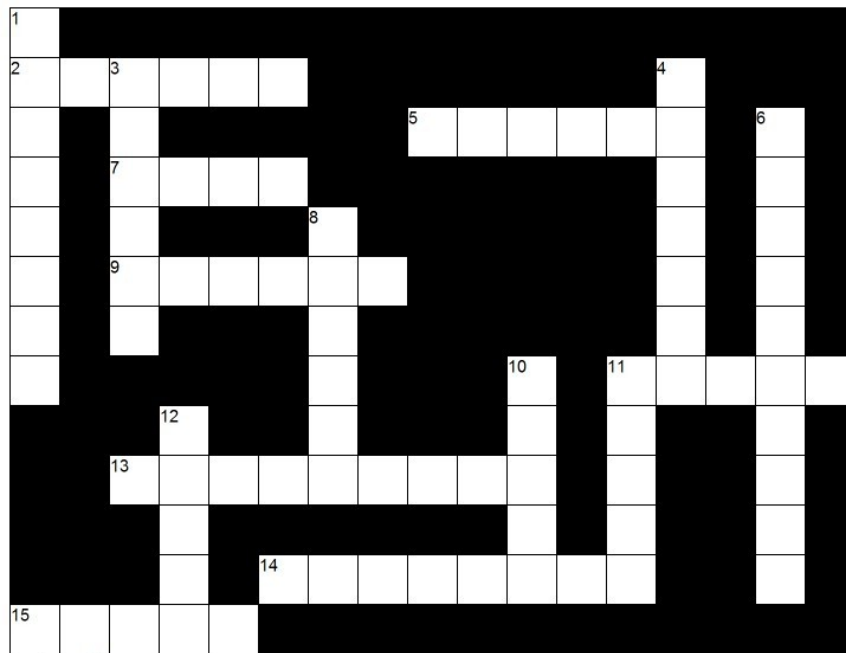


A Bible Crossword: Matthew, Part 4



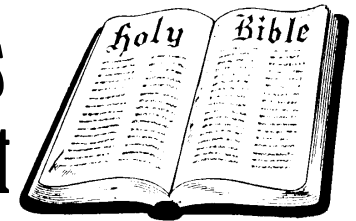
Across: 2. John's location when he sent disciples to Jesus. 5. Number of *disciples* Jesus called. 7. What Jesus give when we come to Him. 9. John came in the likeness of this prophet. 11. John was accused of having one. 13. City of Jesus day that would be brought down to Hades for not repenting. 14. Jesus said to be wise as these (but not forked-tongued). 15. What Jesus brought—it wasn't peace.

Down: 1. You are of more value than these birds. 3. The 12 were sent to the lost sheep of this house. 4. James and John's father. 6. Jewish houses of worship were the disciples would face scourging. 8. A servant is not above his _____. 10. Peter's other name. 11. Jesus said to be harmless as these birds. 12. One is rewarded for bringing a cold cut of this to a disciple.

-All answers can be found in Matthew, Chapters 10-11.

All references from the New King James Version

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Redeeming the Time

Last weekend, we had a gospel meeting with Jamey Hinds, an old friend and classmate of mine. He, his wife, and their four daughters stayed with us.

We didn't sleep much.

Sleep was something for which we didn't have time. The meeting only lasted three days, so we had very little time to catch up, talk, and take in the sights (We did pay a visit to the Space & Rocket Center on Saturday). When you know you don't have much time, you try to squeeze as much as you can from every day, and you burn the midnight oil.

I think that redeeming the time is about that, squeezing time and burning midnight oil.

Paul said, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16).

To the Colossians, he said, "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time" (4:5).

Redeeming the time is using well the opportunities you have been given. The old Indian proverb, "You can never step in the same river twice," is insightful in understanding opportunity. One opportunity may look very much like an-

other, but every moment, every opportunity is unique. Those we fail to act upon are lost.

Moreover, we can never count on having another opportunity. English poet Henry Austin Dobson wrote, "Time goes, you say? Ah no, alas, time stays, we go."

The 39th Psalm states, "Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor" (vs. 5).

James says, "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:13-14).

When you only have three days for a meeting, you try hard to make the best of them.

What we sometimes fail to see is that life is like a short gospel meeting. We really don't much time. Given the brevity of life and certainty of judgment, we have to choose how to spend our moments. We need to redeem the time in our lives (Eph. 5:15-16) by choosing to walk circumspectly, pursuing righteousness even in evil days. We need to redeem the time regarding the lost (Col. 4:5) by using our opportunities to point them towards heaven.

Jean-Luc Picard said it well, "Someone once told me that time was a predator that stalked us all our lives. I rather believe that time is a companion who goes with us on the journey and reminds us to cherish every moment, because it will never come again. What we leave behind is not as important as how we've lived" (*Star Trek: Generations*)

—RAB

CHURCH GROWTH

The following poll, from *Walking in the Light*, was taken of several religious groups to get some insight into what promotes church growth. Where does it come from?

1% occurs from "walk ins."

1% results from special crusades or evangelistic programs.

2% occurs from the general visitation by the preacher.

3% occurs from people finding a special or unique need in a congregation.

6% occurs because the church has a good or popular preacher.

7% occurs because the congregation has good children's and adult Bible classes.

10% occurs because the church offers pleasing social programs.

70% occurs from members inviting their friends, relatives or other people in their daily life.

If we expect people to just "walk in" and join in our worship, we are unlikely to have much success. If we expect the preacher to fill the pews, we will probably be just as disappointed. Even unscriptural programs that we would not participate in yield little results.

If we want to grow, we have to "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time" (Colossians 4:5). With that in mind, when's the last time you invited someone to study with you or come to church? —RAB