

# Through The Bible In One Year

## The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

## Daily Devotional Companion

### Week 11

**Day 71:** Read Numbers 16.41-18.32; Mark 16.1-20;  
Psalm 55.1-23; and Proverbs 11.7.

### Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Numbers:** God's patience wears thin, again, because God's people complain about God's chosen leaders, Moses and Aaron, again. God is incensed at their obstinacy. 'Step aside' God says to Moses, 'so I can end this once and for all.' Moses acts quickly—not to get out of the way, but to get in the way—in between God and the wayward people. He dispatches the high priest, Aaron, to take fire from the altar and burn incense among the assembled people to make atonement for them. The people are incensed with the sweet smell of the incense that burns at the altar in the Tent of Meeting, the Tabernacle. Not a moment too soon! Already the consequences of their disobedience and separation from God are falling on them. A plague breaks out among them, a physical reminder of the unwholesome inner attitude of heart and spirit that plagues them. Who is to lead? A strange competition occurs between....walking staffs. The heads of the twelve tribes are all commanded to bring their walking staffs to the Tent of Meeting. The one whose staff sprouts is God's chosen leader. But how can dried, dead sticks sprout? It would take a miracle. It would take the power of God. The one for whom the miracle occurs, that one has been selected by God himself. The next morning only one has sprouted—and not just sprouted, but blossomed and born almonds as fruit—the staff of Aaron for the tribe of Levi. Only Aaron and his descendants may serve as priests. Only the Levites, related by blood, may handle the holy things in the Tabernacle where God is present. These leaders will have no inheritance of land among the people. They derive their daily sustenance from the gifts of the people as their due, being compensated for their work by the tithes and offerings the people give. Thus God, who provides what the people need, provides for the leaders through the people. **Questions:** 1. Peter will call all who believe in Jesus Christ 'a royal priesthood,' meaning priests for the king. What does it mean to me that God has consecrated me to be a priest by his blood shed on the cross to offer prayer and 'sacrifices' for the people around me? 2. What can I do to be closer to God's presence so, like the dry stick of Aaron, I too can bud, blossom and bear fruit under God's powerful touch? 3. When and why am I tempted to grumble against the leaders God's put over my faith community or church? What can I do to be more supportive of the leaders God's appointed?

**Mark:** The barrier is big—solid stone, in fact—and we are so weak. Who will roll the stone away? Why, it's...gone! Rolled right aside. No problem! But where is he? Now that's a problem. The women are courageous in their grief...brave enough to enter the dark tomb. They find someone they don't know, have never seen before. Wonderings fly as fast as their worries. Where could they have taken him? And why would they want to move him? And who were they? The Romans? The religious leaders? He's dead, after all. They ought to show respect for the dead. He reads their minds. He reads their fears. 'Don't be afraid. You are looking for Jesus in the wrong place. He is among the dead no longer. He is among the living.' And now they are truly terrified. For if he is among the living, then he might encounter them any moment, anywhere. They flee from the tomb. The whole world looks like a tomb to them, because he has risen to a new life. This must be a life that makes this life look like death. Their world is forever changed. It has become a new creation. Like newborn babies, the eyes of their minds cannot make out these new shapes and colors of this strange new world. So they flee from the tomb, terrified and tell no one. How can they? What words can express this new life? What words can tell of this Crucified and Risen One, who must be none other than....the God-Man... the first of a whole new human being.. Yet the very terror—the tremendous awe that silences them—is the most eloquent language of all to express the goodness and glory of God in the One who walked away from the tomb at the dawning of that new day. **Questions:** 1. Do I really comprehend the miraculous meaning of the Resurrection of Jesus? Have I been silenced in awe and amazement of God's power and glory in the Resurrection? 2. Why doesn't the revolutionary reality of the Resurrection change all my thinking and actions? Why don't I live everyday in the awareness that Jesus is alive and right with me always, as he has promised? How would my life be different if I did? What can I do to live Christ's resurrection more and more, day by day?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you are more alive than I am. Compared to your life, mine is death itself. How I hunger and long for your life. Instead, I live like the dead, unaware of the life you live right beside me. You came that we might have life and have it abundantly. Let me live everyday in the wonder and joy of the Resurrection. Let me live this new life with the wonder and innocence of an infant who is seeing things and people for the first time. Fill me with holy fear, I who am so afraid in the life I now lead, so that my fears are transformed in the magic of Easter morning. Let my deeds, not just my words, shine with the light of the new day that dawned when the stone was rolled away and you walked forth into the world, the first human being in God's new creation. Amen.

**Day 72:** Read Numbers 19.1-20.29; Luke 1.1-25;  
Psalm 56.1-13; and Proverbs 11.8.

**Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:**

**Numbers:** How shall that which is unholy be made holy? Only by something sacrificed. The sacrificial animal must never have been under a yoke, never have been broken by bearing a burden. It can not have one single defect or blemish. It must be a red heifer, which the high priest must take outside the camp and slaughter. Then its blood is to be scattered seven times at the front of the Tent of Meeting. The whole of it is to be burned, blood, flesh, hide, everything. Someone who is ritually clean—fit for work in God’s tent of Meeting—must gather up the ashes and put them in a ceremonial ‘clean’ or sanctified place outside the camp. Some of the ashes are to be placed in a jar, water poured upon them, and the water used to sprinkle the Tent and all its furnishing to make them ‘clean’ or pure again. By sprinkling with the water, even a person who is unclean will be made pure again, fit for the presence of God. The people, however, are more worried about another kind of water—the physical water they need to sustain their physical life. They grumble against their leaders again. Again God provides. ‘Take the sacred staff that sprouted with new life,’ he commands Moses; and ‘Speak to the rock and it will pour out water.’ Speak to a rock? A rock? Well, speaking to the people sometimes seems like that to Moses. Is it his frustration finding its way out? He strikes the rock twice, instead of just speaking to it; and God is incensed now. Could it be the people would mistake who was acting here? Was Moses some powerful magician? Was it a magic wand of sorts, this staff? Or can God’s Word work wonders. They don’t have the opportunity to see demonstrated the power of God’s Word when Moses takes things into his own hands. Questions: 1. What does it mean for me to be washed in Holy Baptism, made clean by being mystically but truly united with the sacrificial death and the powerful resurrection of Jesus Christ in the baptism he himself commanded? 2. When and how am I tempted to take things into my own hands and do things for God that God doesn’t want or in ways that God doesn’t want? 3. In what areas of my life and ministry for God do I now need to ‘Let go, and let God’?

**Luke:** How was scripture written? Luke says, in his case, that he wrote ‘an orderly account’ after he ‘carefully investigated’ evidence from ‘eyewitnesses’ about everything ‘from the beginning.’ This is no novel. This is not fiction. And why was scripture written? Again Luke says so someone named ‘Theophilus’, which means ‘lover of God’, may know the ‘certainty’ of the things you have been taught. God-lovers want to know. Really. They want to question and examine things. They want to know with certainty. They will not take just anyone’s word. Luke is quite confident. This faith is historical. This is not myth and certainly no fairytale. It is either true...or a lie. There is no in-between. And whoever wants, can know, with certainty. Reality is not relative. Truth exists. So Luke begins his account by saying simply “In the time of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest...” Real people in real places. Archaeology has proven the existence of Herod. Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian who wrote at roughly the same time as Luke, wrote about bloodthirsty Herod, of whom Caesar was reported to say “Better to be Herod’s pig than his son.” Herod wouldn’t touch pigs, but he slaughtered his own son, for fear he would steal his throne. But there are other actors at work in this divine, historical drama. In fact, the Author of all is involved in this story. The curtain goes up on Act 1, Scene 1. Center stage: a barren woman, well along in years, who will bring forth a child to herald

the coming of the Lord, to turn people's hearts toward God again. This history must be a comedy then? Will all turn out well in the end? How can it have a happy ending, with Herod, bloodthirsty Herod, commanding the stage? Maybe it is a tragedy. **Questions:** 1. What does it mean that my faith is a historical faith, with real evidence supporting its truthfulness? What does this mean when compared with all the world religions that, unlike following Christ, have no basis in history, and which cannot be proven or disproven? 2. How can I come, like Luke, to speak to others with complete certainty about the truthfulness of Jesus' claims to be God's Son, and that all his words and actions are divinely initiated? 3. How can my reading scripture give me this certainly so, like Luke, I can live confidently in a world where deadly powers and spiritual forces are waging war to prevail?

**Prayer:** Dear God, you are God always and everywhere. Help me to remember that this means God of this time and this place, here, where you have put me. I forget sometimes that I am an actor in your divine drama. I forget that you are my Author, and you have written for me a part to play in your plan to redeem the world. It amazes me that you have made me to know you, intimately, with certainty, O God who created galaxies. How can I know you, my Author. Let me live in your Word then. Open your living, life-giving Word to me. Let me live with the complete confidence that comes from intimacy with you. Let me know you, as a lover knows the beloved. And let me live your Word for everyone around me, in this time and this place where you have put me, that they may come to know, with absolute certainty, your endless, limitless love for them. Amen.

**Day 73:** Read Numbers 21.1-22.20; Luke 1.26-56;  
Psalm 57.1-11 and Proverbs 11.9-11.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Leviticus:** A snake on a pole? In the wilderness they travel, there are so many dangers. Enemies surround God's people. Most dangerous of all, are the enemies which lurk within. Their own wants make them willing to return to slavery in Egypt to satisfy themselves. "The people grew impatient on the way." They complain against God and the leader God chose to lead them, because there is no bread, no water, and they detest the food they have in the wilderness. To them, the food of the free person, even when on a journey led by God himself, is miserable when compared with the slave's food in Egypt. Poison to fight poison. God sends venomous snakes among them. Many die. The rest repent and beg Moses to pray to the Lord for them. Moses again goes to God for them. God's solution: Make a bronze snake that looks just like the deadly ones, put it on a pole, so anyone bitten can look at it and live. One day, God's own Son will hang on a cross, looking every bit like a condemned criminal, charged with trying to poison the very faith of Israel. And yet, everyone who looks on him with faith, believing he is God's Son, the Savior, will live...forever. Like the Roman Centurion. Like the thief who simply asked

“Lord, remember me...” and heard those amazing words: “Today you will be with me in paradise.” No one need be God’s enemy. God has given the way to life...a man on a cross.

**Questions:** 1. As the people of Israel looked at the bronze snake on the pole in order to have new life, how often do I set aside time to meditate on the cross and reflect on Christ’s love for me in suffering so? 2. Whom do I know who has been “bitten” or hurt most by the world, life or the evil one? How can I help them come to know Christ crucified and to experience God’s love for them in a tangible way?

**Luke:** A virgin? A young woman, almost a girl? From a purity standpoint, the virgin aspect makes sense, God. But, really that moves just not very...not so...well...smart. I mean, to bear and raise your Son? Wouldn’t it make more sense to have someone with more experience? Maybe a queen, wise in the ways of the world, skilled in speech and politics. She could show him how to shine. This young girl, from nowhere—from Nazareth—what does she bring to the table? She responds to the angel’s announcement, “How can this be? I am a virgin?” It can be, because God can do anything. Oh, I see. You can do anything. Except force someone. You can’t do that, because you won’t do that. It’s not in your nature. So you simply announce your plan and this young girl, so innocent in the ways of mankind, she says ‘yes.’ While few people are so blessed as to have angels deliver God’s messages, God speaks to his people these days frequently, through his Word, in our thoughts when we pray or walk with him beside us through our days.

**Questions:** 1. Why is it so hard to believe that God would want to speak to me personally? 2. What is the purpose God has for me here in this world at this time and in this place? 3. How can I, like Mary, help bring Jesus into my world?

**Prayer:** Yes, Lord. That’s all I want to say, like Mary. Yes. You can do all things. Nothing is impossible for you. Not one thing. Except forcing me, coercing me, compelling me. To love you. To follow you. To obey you. To do your work, in your way, in your time, when you want me to. You can’t make me, great God that you are. Your very greatness is why you won’t, because you love me so. Love doesn’t coerce or compel. So I say ‘Yes.’ Have your will, your way, completely. Let it be. Today and tomorrow. Yes, Lord. Amen.

**Day 74:** Read Numbers 22.21-23.30; Luke 1.57-80;  
Psalm 58.1-11; and Proverbs 11.12-13.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Numbers:** A donkey who talks? Well, why not? If people can be like donkeys sometimes, why can’t a donkey act like a person? If people can make ‘asses’ of themselves by what they say, why can’t an ass make like a person and speak the truth sometimes? A prophet named Balaam nearly makes an ass of himself by accepting a bribe from an enemy king to curse the people God is blessing. Who knows why exactly. This king is very persistent, very

persuasive and paid very well. Perhaps the prophecy business was slack just then. God saw his wayward heart and warned him...by making his donkey speak to him. And he got the message. Imagine that. Would you listen to a donkey. I mean, you would certainly listen to the remarkable messenger because it's so unexpected. But would you believe him, or her, or...it? It's not the messenger that matters; it's the Author...and the messenger. Balaam gets the message. Three times he turns the king's requests down to curse God's people and instead three times blesses them. He will do only what God says to do, and say only what God says he should say. **Questions:** 1. If God were to use someone highly unlikely as his spokesperson—a child, someone I don't know, someone very different from me—would I listen or disregard the message because of the messenger? 2. When have I hesitated to speak up—especially for God—because I felt like an 'ass'—like someone too inadequate to have an important word or a good idea that God wants me to speak for him? 3. Whom does God want me to bless? Whom should I be praying for, for God to bless in a special way right now?

**Luke:** Speechless. I would be, too. The promise is so impossible. Surely it's not asking to much to ask for a sign? The sign is: you will be speechless, until you see the promise fulfilled. Elizabeth, beyond the age of childbearing, gives birth and nurses her baby, at her sagging breasts, laughing and loving it. Her husband is speechless because of his unbelief. Him I can understand. I would want some proof, some sign, too. And God's sign is silence—the husband's own. He will be speechless until God delivers on the promise. And when the time comes to name the child, the mother insists on a name no one has on either side of the family. Uproar follows amongst all the relatives. Perhaps they had hoped to have this miracle child named after them. The silent father writes on a tablet his name is John—as God had commanded. In that instant, his tongue is freed to speak. Like the child who never speaks until he utters a complete sentence the first time he speaks, Zechariah speaks the most important words of all: he praises God. Now, that's what the human tongue was made for: To praise the One who made the human tongue...who gave human beings speech, so they might speak with God. **Questions:** 1. Do I take time just to tell God I love him and lavish words of praise on him personally? 2. How is that, whenever I doubt God's working in my life, I lack power and lose the ability to speak...for him? 3. What promise of God that is to be working in my life am I doubting right now?

**Prayer:** God, before your majesty, your might, your wisdom, your perfection, your purity, your mercy, I am speechless. Your limitless love for me stills my spirit, quiets my heart, and silences my lips. My human tongue cannot praise in a way worthy of you, and so I will be silent. Let me simply sit in silence and love you without words. You are worthy of more. You are worthy of all the praise, of all the people, of all time, and still it would not be enough. So accept this silent, longing love as the fullness of praise you deserve. Amen.

**Day 75:** Read Numbers 24.1–25.18; Luke 2.1-35;  
Psalm 59.1-17; and Proverbs 11.14.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Numbers:** Deception can conquer your enemy more quickly than open warfare. Sometimes the full frontal attack is not the best way to defeat the enemy. Tempting them instead with favors, and getting them compromise their values, that can be more effective. On the journey through the wilderness with God toward a distant, unseen promised land, the people find the possibility of instant gratification more compelling than delayed gratification of a promise. They are enticed to the sexual pleasure involved in worship of the fertility gods of the Moabites. Consequences come quickly. A plague breaks out. The guilty ones –everyone who has joined themselves, physically and spiritually, to the Baal Peor, the god of the Moabites must be eliminated from among the people, or everyone will die. One man takes severe action to remove the guilt, putting to death some guilty ones caught in the very act of disobedience. One day many years later one man will take a severe step to remove guilt: he will die on a cross, so the guilty may live. **Questions:** 1. How does the evil one use deceptive enticements to win me to his ways? Which enticements am I most susceptible to: \_\_\_ pride \_\_\_ sexual desires \_\_\_ wanting things \_\_\_ other. 2. When and how have I been tempted to compromise God's values in my life? In what arena of life am I most tempted to compromise: \_\_\_ family \_\_\_ friends \_\_\_ work \_\_\_ politics \_\_\_ other.

**Luke:** History is raging on all around. Conquerors are compelling taxes. Emperors are ordering a census. What really counts? Money? Numbers, like knowing how many people you rule, or who might swell the size of an army? In a wonderful twist of irony, the smartest, most powerful people in the world miss the most important person ever to enter the world: a baby born in a stable. Shepherds hear the news first, and fly straight to seek him. His coming is heralded by angels who must first tell them not to be afraid. Afraid? They have plenty to be afraid of, including emperors and taxes. Do not be afraid any more, because of a baby? No, because of a savior, Christ, the Lord, who has been born. A savior for all the people. Everyone counts to God, even shepherds. Mary marvels as she hears the story unfold. She treasures all in her heart, as she treasures God's Son in her arms. And the shepherds return to their place, their work. But they do not return. Someone else comes in their place. New people. People glorifying and praising God. People telling everyone who will listen. People unafraid, because God has shown they count. **Questions:** 1. Whom do I tend to defer to in terms of their power, popularity or prominence in the world? 2. Whom do I tend to discount as beyond or beneath God's caring, by my not associating with them or serving them for God? 3. Of what, or whom, am I afraid? How does God send help and hope to me, as he did the shepherds? 4. Do I take time to treasure in my heart what God has done for me, as Mary did? What would I place on my treasure list of gifts from God?

**Prayer:** God, the world is so big, and I am so small. Who am I? I am no person of power, or privilege, or prominence. I work about my menial tasks, day after day, struggling to do the daily tasks I have, like a shepherd minds straying sheep. I am afraid most that it is all

meaningless. I fear most of all that it all counts—that I count—for nothing. Can it be true, what you say to me. Good news? Glad tidings? Don't be afraid? Here is my savior. Come for me, because I count? To you? Come, humble and helpless, just like me. I must count with you, for you to do that. Everyone must count to you. Count me in. I will treasure in my heart the hope you have set afire there. And let me tell others, through my actions as much through my words, that they count...with me...but especially, with You, my Savior, and theirs. Amen.

**Day 76:** Read Numbers 26.1-51; Luke 2.36-52;  
Psalm 60.1-12; and Proverbs 11.15.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Numbers:** The answer is: 601,730. Doesn't God know already? Doesn't he, as scripture says, know the number of hairs on each person's head, or the number of stars in the sky? Why does he tell Moses to take a census of every man twenty years old or older? They didn't think of it on their own. They want to follow what God says, not strike off in their own direction. Obediently they order the census. The number of men in that 'demographic' as we would say today was 601,730. God knew already. Then why make them take the census? Could it be to remind Israel how faithful God is to his promises. From just two, from childless Abraham and Sarah, whom God promised descendants as numerous as the stars, God has raised up a people of well over a million, when women and children are added to the census numbers. Twenty years old or older would also mean that these were all the people who had been born as slaves in Egypt. These are the ones who resisted God and complained bitterly that they would rather die well fed as slaves in Egypt than suffer the price of freedom in following God. God is birthing a new generation that knows the freedom of following God through the wilderness paths of this world. The old in us must die for the new person God is raising to live in relationship with him to be born. The earthly promised land will hold millions, but God's new heaven and new earth will be home to countless millions. Questions: 1. How does it excite me to know that I am counted among God's people, the people he has called and redeemed to be in relationship with him? How does it challenge me? 2. What faith community am I a part of? Who are my partners in God's work, and what am I doing in God's work through that community that demonstrates I am counted among God's people?

**Luke:** Old Anna. Many might say, crazy—even fanatical—old Anna. She never left the temple. Perhaps it was a hideout. An escape maybe? Something to deaden the pain, or preempt any more from coming? She had suffered tremendously, quite young. She had been bereft of her husband only seven years after her marriage. Just enough time to work through the first difficulties and differences, and really establish a lasting relationship, to really love one another; for love is not the hot and heavy emotion of the newlyweds. It is

tried and tested love that is real. Whatever were you doing, God, in taking him from her after seven years? She stayed in the temple day and night till she eighty-four. Not hiding out. She was worshipping, night and day, fasting and praying. Worshipping? The God who allowed her husband to die so young. Yes, worshipping, thanking and praising, with fasting and praying, this God. And the result: she comes up and speaks to all who will listen about the child Jesus. The result of the worshipping, fasting and praying, of living where God meets people, is: she recognizes Jesus for who he is. He is in his Father's house, where he belongs, even as a baby. The child grows. His faithful family makes pilgrimage to Jerusalem as God commands. Jesus is among the extended family, but not when they journey home. For three days he is missing, but finally they find him...in the temple. He is listening...learning. He is asking questions, deep questions. "Your father and I have been searching for you! How could you treat us so?" his mother scolds. "Why were you searching for me?" twelve year old Jesus asks? It is the same question he will ask, in different forms again and again in his public ministry as a man: what do you want me to do for you, or who do you say I am? His own mother and earthly father don't really recognize who he is yet. Jesus almost scolds them in reply: "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" Then they went to their home in Nazareth. He was obedient to them. This was his school, patient endurance. Through obedience he grew in wisdom and favor with God and people. The same way as a woman untimely bereft of her husband - through persistent, faithful endurance. **Questions:** 1. When I experience sudden disappointments, do I respond with worship to God, or complaining? Do I intensify my attempt to draw closer to God in a deeper relationship through fasting, prayer, participating in God's faith community and the other ways God gives, or do I tend to wander away? 2. What in my life and situation am I called to endure faithfully now, in order to grow spiritually? What am I called to challenge and change? 3. How do I spend time together with God's people around God's Word, asking questions, hearing teaching, sharing insights, listening and learning more about God and God's ways?

**Prayer:** Lord, give me the hunger for learning more about you that a child has. Make me more like the child, Jesus. Let me seek out the place where you are found. Let me listen and ask questions and learn...to know you more, my Father. Give me the hunger of old Anna. May I right now, and until I am eighty-four...or for as many years as you give me...let me love you. Let me worship and adore you, let me pray and fast and do whatever it takes to know you more. I don't really know, among the many choices that confront me every day, what will find favor and bring joy to your heart. But this, I believe, is true: the desire to know you more and love you more, does bring joy to your heart. Like ancient old Anna, let me find Jesus, and let me speak of him to all I know who are searching and seeking, to all who hunger for the redemption he alone can give them. Amen.

**Day 77:** Read Numbers 26.52–28.15; Luke 3.1-22;  
Psalm 61.1-8; and Proverbs 11.16-17.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Numbers:** In the promised land, everyone will have their place. No one is more privileged than another. One person, one place. So bigger clans get bigger parcels, to be fair to all. And what is more, it is God's will that every one of his people have their place forever. In the earthly promised land, in Palestine in those ancient times as today, because the enemy, death, disrupts and destroys, inheritance is the way the land is kept from generation to generation. But who shall inherit? Only men? Some daughters, whose father died without a male heir, confront Moses with a question and a demand: "Should our father's name die because he had no son? Give us the property!" Moses doesn't make the decision according to his own wisdom, or by taking a vote of the people, or by looking around at the customs of the nations next door. He consults God and God says "What they are saying is right, you must certainly give them the inheritance!" But not everyone will get into the earthly promised land. Moses may see it from afar, atop a mountain, because he rebelled in striking the rock from which the water sprang at God's command. Moses, the law giver, has violated God's command and cannot enter the promised land. Moses pleads with God to appoint someone to lead the people into the promised land, or they will be "like sheep without a shepherd." God has already provided for that: one of the two men originally to explore the promised land, one who, though he saw powerful enemies holding the land, trusted that God had the power to overcome any enemy. His name is Joshua. Joshua will lead the people into the promised land. And the name Joshua, when translated into the Greek of the New Testament, is...Jesus. One day he will look with compassion on people who are harassed and helpless, "like sheep without a shepherd." One day he will lay down his life for the sheep, sacrificed as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and become the gate to a new world...the real Promised Land. Questions: 1. Do I treat everyone as a full person in their own right, regardless of sex, age, or any other 'accidental' conditions they have? What prejudices do I have? 2. Do I trust in something other than Jesus to get me into the promised land? What else might I, or others, try to trust to get the abundant life we all desire deep in our hearts, trying to barge into the promised land by our own way?

**Luke:** The drought had been unbelievably long. Centuries long. Yet in the fifteenth year of Tiberias Caesar's reign, the living water began to flow again. God had been silent. 'The Word of God came to John. In the desert. Go figure! Truly, the whole world was a desert, longing for new life. One doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. The God who had been silent for centuries speaks through John, son of Zechariah. John, the prophet, himself fulfills prophecy. Isaiah foretold his appearing: 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord!' The whole world, it seems, is thirsty. Crowds go out to John in the desert. Tax collectors and soldiers go out to John in the wilderness. They were all wondering in their hearts if John were the One they were seeking, the Messiah. "I only baptize with water," John states. "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.' They need the fire, because their hope and courage are nearly quenched. They need the Spirit, because they have lost all connection with God. But now the Spirit is moving. John is a sign; a promise. Surely enemies will try to quench the Spirit. John is imprisoned for proclaiming judgment against

King Herod. Has he no fear? No. None. The Spirit is moving. God's Word is at work in the world again, and wherever God's Word is at work, watch out. Something big's bound to happen. **Questions:** 1. How hungry am I for the Word of God? To what lengths will I go (or not go) to seek God in his Word? 2. If John were to address me, as he addressed the crowds, the tax collectors, and the soldiers, with a specific word of correction for my lifestyle or actions, what would he call me to change or correct as a way 'to prepare the way for the Lord?' 3. John particularly talked about acting justly and compassionately toward others as the way to prepare the Lord's coming. Toward whom do I especially need to show compassion or fairness? 4. Have I acknowledged Jesus' Lordship over my life and received his baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire? How filled with his Spirit and on fire for God am I?

**Prayer:** Father! I have an inheritance from you? Me? Yes, you have promised me and appointed for me a place forever. Your Word declares it is so. You sent your Deliverer to lead me out of slavery and into the Promised Land, where you have made a place for me. But to receive the inheritance, someone must die. Someone has. The cross opened the way to the promised land of life with you now and forever. Give me now the interest of the inheritance you will one day give me in fullness. Send your Spirit, the Spirit of Christ's cross and resurrection, that I may be made new after his image. His character, his new nature, is the inheritance I long for. Then, with his Spirit and nature living in me and through me, use me as you will to prepare your coming to those around me every day. Amen.

## Through The Bible In One Year: Week 11

### Sunday Worship Lessons

First Lesson (Old Testament): Numbers 21.4-9

Psalm: 55.1-8

Second (New Testament) Lesson: Luke 2.6-20.

Theme: A Bronze Serpent And A Baby