

July 1

Nehemiah saw that people were buying and selling on the Jewish Sabbath instead of keeping it as a holy day. He caused the gates of Jerusalem to be closed on Friday afternoon before sundown and stay closed all Saturday. That seemed to solve the problem of buying and selling, but it is doubtful that it changed the hearts of people who wanted to buy and sell on the Sabbath. Do we have to have obedience to God's law forced on us in order to get us to obey him?

Again, there was a problem of men marrying pagan wives. About half of the children of these marriages could not even speak the language of Judah. Instead they spoke the languages of their pagan mothers. Even the grandson of the high priest took a pagan wife, the daughter of Sanballat, the opponent of rebuilding the wall. Nehemiah put a stop to such marriages. A marriage with an unbeliever has a dampening effect on the believer's faith in God. This may happen naturally when an unbeliever is converted and his or her spouse is not. But it is a warning to believers who want to marry an unbeliever. Do we have spouses that help us grow in our faith?

King Ahasuerus of Persia threw a great banquet to celebrate his reign. On the last day, he called for his queen named Vashti to come before him wearing her royal crown so that he could show off her beauty. For some reason, she refused, leaving the king at a loss what to do. So he consulted his seven counselors, asking for their advice. They advised him to find a new queen, thus setting the stage for Esther to become queen. Do we ask for advice when we are at a loss for what to do? Do we see the hand of God at work behind the scenes in advice given?

Paul told the Ephesians that the Christian warfare is not against people of flesh and blood, but against spiritual beings of evil and darkness. The armor that one wears for the battle consists of truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God, which is the sword the Spirit uses. Do we wear this kind of armor for our battle?

July 2

Mordecai was a third-generation exiled Jew who lived in the time of King Ahasuerus of Persia. When his uncle Abihail and his uncle's wife died, they left behind a daughter Hadassah, who was also known by the name Esther. Mordecai took his young orphaned cousin and raised her as his own daughter. Do we care about children who have been orphaned? Do we try to help family members who have problems?

When King Ahasuerus remembered that he had banned the beautiful Vashti from ever seeing him again, he needed a new queen. His servants suggested that he should gather beautiful young virgins from all over his kingdom and select one of them to be his queen. So he gathered the young women, including Esther, for his harem. After a year's beauty treatment, the young women would go to the king, and after a night with him, be sent to the concubine harem. They would not go to him again unless he called for them by name. Thus he gathered many concubines, a number of which he would never see again. While this great number of concubines showed his status as king, it is also indicative of a kind of greed: the accumulation of things rarely or never used. While we may not accumulate many wives or concubines like a king, we may be subject to greed in other ways. Do we accumulate things we don't need?

Esther was a beautiful young woman on the outside surrounded by many other beautiful young women. How is it that she was favored first by the eunuch Hegai in charge of the harem and then by the king, who decided to make her his queen? The answer is that not only was she beautiful on the outside, but also beautiful on the inside. Sometimes external beauty leads to a kind of pride that makes a person think they are entitled. This can happen to men as well as to women. Are we people who are proud of our looks but have no reason to be proud of how we act toward others? Can God's Spirit change how we look on the inside?

Mordecai helped to save the king's life, but received no immediate reward. Are we upset when we are not recognized for what we do?

July 3

When the king's official Haman convinced the king that the Jews needed to be exterminated, Mordecai asked Esther to go to the king and save her people. She was fearful, saying that the king had not asked for her for a month, and if one approached the king uninvited, that person would be put to death unless the king held out his scepter in acceptance. Mordecai replied that if she failed to act, she would be destroyed, but salvation would come to the Jews from another source. Further, he said that she may have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. God is not mentioned in the text, but he is definitely there in the picture. Things had worked out in her life to place her in the position to save the Jews. Can you see the hand of God at work in her life? Can you see the hand of God at work in your life? Mordecai shows his faith that God will save his people. Do we have faith that God will ultimately save us because of what Jesus has done?

The book of Proverbs says that pride goes before destruction. That was certainly the case with Haman. After he returned from the first day of Esther's banquet, he told his family about his wealth, the number of his sons, and his promotions and honor by the king and queen. In spite of this, he harbored racial hatred for the Jews in his heart that made him upset. This racial hatred was about to make him lose all that he was proud about, and he didn't even realize it. Are we proud of the things that we have while we are spiritually bankrupt? Do we harbor racial hatred in our hearts? Do we realize that God made all people?

When the king could not sleep, he called for the annals of the kingdom to be read to him. There he found that Mordecai had saved his life and never been rewarded. When he asked Haman how to honor someone, Haman thought to himself that he was the one to be honored. He proposed a grand way of honoring the person and was then told by the king to honor his enemy Mordecai that way. Do we vainly have imaginations about how honorable we are? Haman was humiliated by honoring Mordecai. Do we set ourselves up for humiliation?

July 4

The word 'God' is not found in the book of Esther, but it is not hard to find God at work there. On the very day that Haman was planning to ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai on a seventy-five foot tall pole, he had to lead Mordecai around the city in honor. Then when he went to the queen's banquet, she accused him of wanting to kill her people. When the king saw him begging the queen for his life, the king thought he was trying to assault the queen. A eunuch helpfully told the king about the pole Haman had erected to hang Mordecai on, and the king said to hang Haman on it. It all turned around in a single day. That is the signature of God. When there is no other hope, that is when God works so that we will know that he is the One doing it. On the day that Haman had picked to kill the Jews, the king allowed the Jews to defend themselves, and it was the enemies of the Jews who were killed. When things work out differently than what people plan, one can see the hand of God at work. Can you see the hand of God at work in your life?

Esther and Mordecai sent letters to the Jews to celebrate the days when things were turned around for them. Those days were called Purim after the 'pur' (the Persian word for lots) that Haman had cast to choose the day to kill the Jews. Do we celebrate when we remember significant days when God has worked in our life? The Lord's Supper is a time when we remember the work of God as Jesus died on the cross for our sins. That is the greatest work in our lives.

Paul told the Philippians that he had given up his old ways of life and counted them as loss for the sake of Christ. He now wanted to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. Not only that, he wanted to share in Christ's sufferings. He did not consider that he had reached his goal, but he pressed on toward the prize of his heavenly calling. Do we continue to press on in our service to God? Or do we become lax? Paul said that we should think about things that are true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy. What kind of things do we think about?

July 5

Job was a blameless and upright man who feared God. God blessed him with ten children, many flocks and herds, and servants to take care of them. The book of Job pulls back the curtain hiding the heavenly realm to tell us what led to Job's misfortune. The Satan (the Hebrew word for accuser) told God that the only reason Job served God was to get his blessings. God allowed him to take those blessings away. Raiders and natural disasters captured or destroyed Job's oxen, donkeys, sheep, camels, most of his servants, and all ten of his children. Job's response was to show his sorrow by tearing his robe and shaving his head, but still he bowed on the ground, worshiping God. He said that he came into this world with nothing and would leave it in the same way. God had given him all that he had and God had a right to take it away. Do we consider the things that we have as something that we have earned or as a gift from God? Do we blame God when we suffer loss?

When the Satan next appeared before God, he suggested that Job would curse God if he lost his health. God gave him permission to make Job ill but not to kill him. So sores broke out over Job's whole body. His wife urged him to curse God and die, but he refused to sin against God. Are we upset with God when sickness comes our way?

Job's three good friends heard about his troubles and came to visit him. When they saw the sorrow he was feeling, they just sat quietly with him for a whole week. It was when they spoke that they hurt him even more. Are we just there with people who are hurting? His friends understood that when we do wrong, bad things often happen to us. They mistakenly thought that meant that when bad things happen, we must have done wrong. Do we too blame people who experience trouble in their lives?

Paul thanked the Philippians for sending aid to him while he was in prison for the gospel. He said that God would reward them for their help. It was an offering to God, a pleasing sacrifice. Do we help those in need? Do we understand that it is a sacrifice offered to God?

July 6

When Job finally began to speak to his friends, he was so despondent that he cursed the day of his birth, wishing that he had never been born. His friend Eliphaz was the first to respond. He said that Job had helped many and they were now here to offer him help. The problem was they thought they were helping when they actually weren't. Have you ever tried to help someone, but your efforts failed? They assumed that Job had done something really bad to bring on all this calamity. Do we make assumptions about other people that turn out not to be true? Eliphaz told Job about a dream that he had. He saw an indistinct spirit that told him that people could not be righteous before God and that God did not trust his servants. Do we listen to our dreams rather than to the word of God? Some of the things that Eliphaz said are true. For example, he said that humans are born to trouble; that is as sure as sparks from a fire fly upward. He also said that God catches the wise in their craftiness, a statement that Paul quotes to the Corinthians. But every error must contain truth; otherwise, it would not be believable at all. Eliphaz said that if Job would just turn back to God, God would restore him as before.

Job responded that he wished God would just let him die. He said that if his friends wanted to help, they should teach him what he had done wrong. Just saying that he needed to repent was not real reproof. He was hurting, and all he could do was talk about it. His friend Bildad said that God doesn't pervert justice, implying that Job must have done something wrong. He appealed to the teachings of those wise men of former generations. Do we lean on the teachings of those who have gone before us instead of the teachings found in the scriptures? Job replied that he knew all the things they were saying. However, he was innocent and did not know how to answer God if he were to contend with him. How could he prove God wrong? God does great things beyond our understanding. Do we sometimes want to argue with God and say he has made a mistake? Is this especially true when what his word says is different from what our society says is right and good?

July 7

As Job replied to his friend Bildad, he maintained that he was blameless and innocent. However, it looked to him like God brings disaster on both the wicked and the innocent. He thought that God was not treating him like he was innocent. But how could he protest against God? God was not a mortal like Job was, and there was no mediator between them. He asked whether God had eyes of flesh and could see as humans do. He wondered if God's years were like human years. It is in Jesus that Job's complaints are answered. Jesus was a mortal, living and dying as a human, but he is also our mediator between God and us. Do we complain against God when things don't go our way? Do we not realize that because of Jesus God understands what we as humans go through?

Job complained that he looked wicked to his friends even though he was righteous. He said he would not live long and wanted a little comfort from God. Then his third friend Zophar spoke. He said that Job was just speaking mocking babble. He accused Job of being punished by God less than his guilt deserved. He did not have a reason as to why this was true like his friends did: a spirit told me in a dream, or our ancestors have said this is true. He just asserted Job's guilt. He was one of those people who thought that if one says it long enough and loud enough, others will believe it. Have you heard people like Zophar who make accusations without giving reasons? Are you one of those people?

Paul told the Colossians that he also suffered. In his case it was because he was spreading the gospel of Christ. When people persecuted him, it was an effort to make him stop preaching. But Paul saw it as more. As a member of the body of Christ, people were still persecuting Christ. He said that he was filling up what was lacking in Christ's afflictions. People persecuted Jesus in his life on earth, and they still continue to persecute him through his body, the church. When Jesus had appeared to Paul (then known as Saul of Tarsus) on the road to Damascus, he asked Paul why he persecuted him. Are we persecuted for the cause of Christ? Do we realize that those persecutions are really against Christ?

July 8

As Job continued to answer his three friends who thought he had done wrong, he said that he also had understanding. He knew the arguments that they were making. However, even though he had lived his life in a blameless way before God, he now had become a laughingstock to those around him. He said that even the animals know that God is the Creator. God has wisdom and strength and shows his power in his dealing with people. Job knew all this, but still he would like to present his case to God. Do you ever want to ask God why certain things are happening in your life? Job said that his friends were using lies about him to whitewash the truth that bad things can happen to good people. They may have had good intentions, but he said that they were not helping him; instead, they were like worthless physicians. It would have been better if they had stayed silent. Have you ever tried to help by saying something that turned out to be the wrong thing? Did you wish that you had just kept quiet? This is a warning that we need to think before we speak. Job said that his friends were trying to defend God from being what they thought was unjust. He said that God would not approve of this kind of partiality. Does God need us to defend him? He will do what he intends to do, whether people like it or not. Job believed he was innocent, and he wanted a chance to present that argument to God. Even if he was found to be wrong, the fact that he would be allowed to speak to God would show that he was not godless. Then he asked God to show him what he had done wrong. He wanted to know why God did not speak to him and why God treated him like an enemy. Do we ever feel like God is ignoring us and closing his ears to our prayers? Job said that mortal humans have only a few days of life and they are full of trouble. Their life is like a withering flower or a passing shadow. A tree that is cut down may sprout branches again if it is watered. But he said that humans do not come back to life. However, Jesus did come back to life, and he promises us that we will too if we have faith in him. He gives us the hope that Job never had. Job could only look forward to dying to ease his pain. Sadly, there are many today who can only look forward to death and not to resurrection. Do we have hope in Jesus?



July 9

Job's friend Eliphaz responded to Job by saying that Job's wisdom was just blowing wind. His contention that bad things can happen to good people would do away with the fear of God. Eliphaz was afraid that if people didn't think that bad things happened only to bad people, they would stop being good. The problem is that Eliphaz was wrong. Bad things can happen to good people. Jesus, who was ultimately good, was crucified. It is a rule of thumb that good things do happen to good people and bad things do happen to bad people. But it is a mistake to make that a hard and fast rule. There are exceptions, and when people see the exceptions, they may lose faith in God. But Job kept his faith. Do we try to make rules that are hard and fast out of principles that are only usual? While we may have good intentions, we may end up hurting the faith of others.

Eliphaz told Job that the ancestors had taught what he was saying. Then he gave examples of how bad things happen to those who do bad things. Job replied that he had heard the same thing taught. But this made his friends miserable comforters. If he were in their place and they were in his place, he could make the same accusations. However, he would rather give encouraging words that would help take away the pain. Do we give encouraging words to those who are in pain? Job complained that God had deserted him, and this had caused his friends to scorn him. The only hope he had left was to die. Have you ever felt so depressed that you just wanted to die? Job felt that way, but this is not the end of his story. It is not the end of our stories either. We have the hope of the resurrection because Jesus rose from the dead.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that news of their faith had traveled to regions beyond them. People had heard that they believed what has been called "the gospel in a nutshell": that they had turned away from worshiping idols to serve a God who is living and true, that he had raised his Son Jesus from the dead, that Jesus had rescued them from God's coming wrath, and they were waiting for his return from heaven.

June 10

Job's friend Bildad wanted to know why Job thought they were stupid. He told about the bad things that happen to wicked people. Job replied that they were tormenting him with their statements. He stated that even if he were in error, it didn't hurt them. He said that God was against him, his friends and relatives had failed him, his servants ignored him, his wife could not stand his bad breath, and little children made fun of him. He wanted his friends to pity him, not attack him. Do we have pity on those who suffer misfortune? In spite of all his problems, Job wanted his words to be written down in a book. He said he knew that his redeemer lives, and that in the end, after his skin had been destroyed, he would see God in his flesh. He had faith in a resurrection; that is why his words were written down in the Bible. Do we have faith in a future resurrection? Is that where our hope lies? Job added that if his friends continued to persecute him, they would bring punishment on themselves. This caused Zophar to say that he was insulted. Like Bildad, he listed all the bad things that could happen to wicked people, implying that Job was wicked since bad things were happening to him. Do we draw implications about other people's way of life?

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that God's will for Christians is their sanctification, that is, the process of becoming holy people. He said that Christians abstain from sexual immorality, a practice common both in his day and ours. Instead, Christians should control their bodies in holiness and honor; they should not be subject to lustful passions like unbelievers are. Do we control our bodies to be holy people like God wants us to be? Do we avoid lustful passions?

Paul also wrote to the Thessalonians that they didn't need to grieve like unbelievers do when a fellow Christian dies. For when Jesus comes again, the dead in Christ will rise first. Then Christians who are still alive will be caught up in the air with them to meet the Lord in the air. We will then always be with the Lord. He said these are comforting words. Are we comforted by the thought of Jesus' coming for us?

July 11

Job's friends had argued that bad people always have bad things happen to them. Job replied that there are exceptions to that rule of thumb. There are people who ignore God and say they don't need him, and yet they live long lives in luxury. He wanted to know how often bad things happen to bad people. He said that his friends may say that the bad results happen to their children. Job said that is not fair; the bad things should happen in their lifetime. He said that if you don't believe me, ask those who are travelers. They will tell you the same thing. Eliphaz replied that God was not reproving Job for his piety. Rather, he listed a number of sins that he imagined Job had committed. He said Job had kept people's pledges, turned away people who were hungry and thirsty, and not helped widows and orphans. Do we sometimes imagine that certain people commit sins when we don't know for sure? In the parable of the prodigal son, the older brother imagined that the younger brother had spent his wealth on prostitutes. We must be careful about accusing people of sins that we just imagine that they commit. Eliphaz said that Job needed to repent of these sins that he imagined and turn back to God. Job responded that he just wanted to have a conversation with God, a chance to present his arguments about why he shouldn't be suffering. Do we sometimes wonder why we are suffering and really want to ask God about it, but that is not possible?

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that Jesus would come back to this world when people did not expect him, that his return would be like a thief coming in the night. People will be saying that they have peace and security, but suddenly destruction will come on them and there is no escape. But Christians are not living in the darkness without Jesus, and they will not be surprised when he returns. Are we looking forward to Jesus coming back? Are we living our lives with that expectation? Or are we so caught up in this world that we too will be surprised at his second coming? Paul said we need to have faith and love and the hope of salvation, for we are destined for that salvation instead of God's wrath. Do we truly trust God that he will save us because of Jesus?

July 12

Job told his friends that he searched for God but could not find him. However, he said that God knows the way he takes, and when he is tested, he will come out like gold. Do we live our lives in such a way that, when we are tested, we are found to be like gold? Job argued that God does not always intervene in this world's affairs to make everything just. The rich abuse the poor. They may work hard but reap few benefits. People commit murder, theft, and adultery. The strong oppress widows, and God permits this. Do we sometimes wish that God would intervene at every wrong? Do we wonder why he allows evil to happen? Do we realize that if he punished evil immediately, we ourselves might be punished? Bildad responded that God is mighty and no one can be righteous in his sight. To God people are like maggots and worms. Then Job said that his friends had not helped him at all. He continued to maintain his integrity and righteousness. He said that mines are hidden places under the ground where one can find iron, copper, sapphires, and gold. However, he wondered where wisdom which is also hidden might be found. He concludes that the fear of the Lord is wisdom and departing from evil is understanding. Do we have wisdom? Do we fear the Lord and depart from evil?

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that the persecutions and afflictions that they were experiencing were intended to make them worthy of God's kingdom. But ultimately God was going to afflict those who were afflicting them. He will then give relief to those who are being afflicted. When Jesus comes again with his angels, he will take vengeance on those who don't know God and those who don't obey the gospel. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and separation from God's presence and glory. Do we realize how tragic it is to reject God? It is necessary to share the gospel with people everywhere, for those who believe in him will marvel when Jesus comes again. Before that day comes, the lawless one will appear who will deceive people into believing a lie. Are we waiting for Jesus to come again? Are we watching out so that we will not be deceived?

July 13

After Job declared that one can find wisdom by fearing the Lord, he reminisced over the previous time when God blessed him, his children were around him, and people respected him. He stood up for the rights of the poor, orphans, and widows, and tried to help the needy and strangers with justice. He thought things would go well until his death in old age. He was like a chief or king among his people. Do we think about how good things used to be, forgetting the bad things that happened? Do we imagine that nothing bad will happen to us in the future? Job complained that he was no longer respected. Even the people who were the outcasts of society now made fun of him; they sang songs that mocked him. It was all part of God's rejection of him. Do we ever feel like both the people around us and God himself has rejected us? Job asked God why he did not answer him. Do we think that God doesn't answer our prayers? Are we impatient with God?

Job stated his reasons why he did not deserve what was happening to him. He did not look at a virgin to lust after her. He did not live a life of falsehood and deceit. He did not commit adultery with his neighbor's wife. He did not ignore the complaints of his male and female servants. He did not ignore the needs of the poor, the orphans, and the widows, but tried to help them. He did not trust in gold or his great wealth. He did not rejoice at the failure of those who hated him. He did not turn away strangers and travelers who needed hospitality. He did not try to hide his transgressions. He did not abuse the land that he worked, but tried to take care of it. He said that if he had done any of these things, he deserved punishment. He just wished that God would tell him what he was being punished for. When bad things happen to us, do we feel like we are being punished?

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that he set them an example of working to earn his own food while with them. He said that if someone refused to work, they should not be given food; they should earn their own living. Do we see the value of work and earning our own money?

July 14

After Job finished speaking, his three friends were silent, having nothing more to say. A young man named Elihu had been quietly listening to the exchange and was angry that the friends could not answer Job. He stated that wisdom does not necessarily come with age, but instead comes from God. James writes that if we lack wisdom we should ask God for it. Elihu said since Job's friends were quiet, he would have something to say. He said that he was full of words and about ready to burst, like a new wineskin without a vent. He must speak to find relief. Do we sometimes feel that we are full of words and must share our opinion with others? At the transfiguration Peter suggested that they should build three booths to honor Jesus, Moses, and Elijah because he didn't know what to say. He said the wrong thing because he thought something should be said. Do we know how to keep quiet when it is not really the time to speak? Elihu told the friends that he would not answer Job using their words, but it seems that he often said something similar. He said that Job did not have to be scared of him. He was only human and Job could speak with him without fear. Job had said that God did not answer him, but Elihu said that God answers in a couple of ways. God may frighten a man from his wickedness with scary dreams. He may also bring pain on a person until he repents; then he will give relief from the pain. This sounds similar to what the friends were saying. Do we often repeat the same things in different words? Is it hard to get wrong ideas out of our heads? Elihu accused Job of being in company with the wicked, for what Job was saying would make God unjust. He was applying his standard of justice on God. Do we sometimes make up our own standard of justice and try to force it on God?

Paul wrote to Timothy that the law is good, but it must be used in the right way. It is used to identify the wicked, not as a means to achieve salvation. He said that he was the chief of sinners because he was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man. But now he had received mercy as an example that anyone can be saved. He was a changed man. Do we let the mercy of God change our lives?

July 15

The young man Elihu continued to berate Job. He said that Job was speaking without knowledge and without insight. Since God is just, Elihu believed that a just God would not bring evil on an innocent person. He said that Job's claim of innocence was a sin. Further, Job wanted to take God to court over it. He said that Job was adding rebellion to his sin. When we see bad things happen to people, do we say they must have sinned to deserve this?

Elihu said that if Job sinned, that did not hurt God. In the same way, if he acted righteously, God was not benefited. Job's sin or righteousness only affected other people. Apparently Elihu had not read the first two chapters of the book of Job. God was very pleased with the way Job acted. But it is true that our actions, whether good or bad, affect other people. Do we think only of ourselves and not of others? Paul wrote that Jesus did not please himself, and we should not please ourselves either.

Elihu claimed that Job opened his mouth with empty talk, that he multiplied words without knowledge. While this is questionable, it is fair to ask what we talk about. Are our conversations about important things, or are they about things that don't really matter in the long run? Is what we say just vain or empty talk? Do we express our opinions on matters that we don't really know about? Do we multiply words on those topics?

Elihu said that Job was angry because of what had happened to him. He warned Job that he must be careful lest his anger should lead him to scoffing and to turn away from God. Do we let our anger control our lives? James writes that human anger does not produce the righteousness of God. Elihu told Job that he must not wish for the night of death. It is possible to let anger grow until we no longer wish to live. Paul said that we should get over our anger before the sun goes down. Do we nurse our anger until it messes with our lives? Or do we let it go?

July 16

As a storm came up, Elihu pointed to God's power shown in the storm. He spoke of the clouds that cover the sky, the thunder and lightning that come from the clouds, and the rain and snow that pour down to make the crops grow. God sends the cold winds from the north that turn the waters to ice. Elihu said that God does great things that we cannot comprehend. He asked several questions of Job about his ability to do the things that God does, implying that Job was not the Creator. Do we believe that the weather shows the power of God? Do we think that God answers prayers to change the weather? To be sure, in the book of Job chapter 1, it was the Satan who brought a windstorm that killed Job's children. Do we pray to be delivered from the evil one as Jesus taught us to pray?

Job did not attempt to answer Elihu's questions. However, Elihu was interrupted by God, speaking to Job out of a whirlwind in the storm. God said, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" He told Job to get ready; God would ask the questions, and Job should answer them if he could. He first asked Job where he was when he laid the foundations of the earth. He asked Job who made the measurements of the earth to make it just the right size. Of course that was God and Job was nowhere around then. He asked Job who made the sea stay in its place and who paints the sky at sunrise. God does all these things. We understand today about gravity and how it holds the sea in its place although we still do not know why it works. Sometimes we get proud of all that we have learned about how the world works. Science has discovered many things about how the creation functions, but the why questions are often elusive. We can read the list of questions that God asked Job and sometimes say that we know the answer to this one or that one now. We know the expanse of the earth, for example. But there is one question God asks that is still a great mystery: "Have the gates of death been revealed to you?" We know how to kill people; we have no clue how to bring them back to life. But God knows. He brought Jesus back to life. Do we believe that?



July 17

As God asked Job questions that he couldn't answer, God asked if a faultfinder should contend with the Almighty. Job responded that he had no answer; he had spoken before, but now he would put his hand over his mouth. God wanted to know if Job would say that God was in the wrong. He asked if Job would condemn God so that he could be justified. Do we find fault with God when things don't go as we wish they would? If so, what would God ask us? God continued to ask Job questions and talk about the wonderful creatures that he had made. Job answered that he now knew that God could do all things and no purpose of God could be thwarted. He said that he had talked about things that he did not understand. Do we sometimes talk about things that are too difficult for us to understand? Job said that although he had heard about God in the past, now he had encountered God. With this in mind, he despised himself and repented in dust and ashes. Out of all the evil that happened to Job, he came to know God better. Do we grow closer to God when bad things happen to us, or does that drive us away from him?

God told Job's friend Eliphaz that the three friends had not spoken rightly about him as Job had. They were to take animals as sacrifices and get Job to offer them and pray for his friends. They did as they were told, and Job prayed for his friends. Do we pray for those that we have disagreed with, especially those who have accused us of wrongdoing? After Job prayed for them, God restored his health and fortunes. In his latter years, he had twice as much as before. People once again respected him. He had seven more sons and three beautiful daughters that he treated equally with their brothers as regards their inheritance.

Paul told Timothy that there is great gain in reverence if we learn contentment. We should be content with food and clothing. We brought nothing into the world and can take nothing physical when we leave it. The desire to be rich leads to temptation and can trap people in desires that ruin them, even leading to loss of faith in God. Are we content with what we have, or do we accumulate more and more things?

July 18

The First Psalm says that the wicked have advice for people but it does not bring happiness. Happiness comes from not following wicked advice but delighting in the law of the Lord instead. Those who do so meditate on God's law day and night. Are we people who find God's law delightful? Do we meditate on it day and night? The psalm says that such people are like trees that grow along streams of water; they bear fruit and do not lose their leaves. Do we let the word of God bear fruit in our lives? In contrast, the psalm says that those who are wicked are like the chaff that the wind blows away.

The Second Psalm says that kings and rulers often set themselves against God. They think that God's reign is like bonds and cords that tie them down, and they want to break away. God's reaction is one of wrath. Who do we place our trust in? Is it some ruler or political leader? Or is the God who is over all? The psalm goes on to say that God has fathered a son who will rule the nations with a rod of iron. The New Testament says this psalm is talking about Jesus. Where is our allegiance? Is it with some ruler who wants to break free of God's bonds? Or is it with the Son of God who died to set us free—free from the bonds of sin?

The Fourth Psalm calls upon God to answer our prayers. But God wants to know how long will we allow his honor to suffer shame, how long will we love vain words and seek after lies? God hears, but he wants a change in our lives. Do we love vain words and seek after lies? Do we allow his honor to suffer shame? He says that when we become angry we should not let that lead us into sin; instead, we should keep quiet and contemplate on our beds what to do. How do we respond to the things that make us angry? Do we lash out at others? Or do we keep silent and contemplate what we should do about the situation? God puts gladness in our hearts more than an abundance of food can do. He gives us peaceful sleep and safety when we lie down. Do we allow our trust in God to give us peaceful sleep? Do we experience his gladness?

July 19

The psalmist in the Sixth Psalm asks God not to rebuke or discipline him when God is angry with him. He wants God to deliver him, not based on what he has done, but based on God's steadfast love and mercy. In his grief he approaches God with weeping and tears on his bed at night. Are we moved when we talk with God so that tears flow from our eyes?

The psalmist in the Eighth Psalm sings about the majestic name of God. When he thinks about the wide expanse of the creation—the heavens, the moon, the stars—he realizes that human beings are such a small part of what God has created. He is in awe that God thinks about and cares for people. Do we contemplate all that God has made? Does it give us a sense of awe at God's power and majesty? The psalmist says that God has made us a little lower than the angels, but with dominion over all of the things he has made on this earth, including the other creatures. How do we exercise that dominion? Do we rule harshly and wastefully over it, or do we, like God, care for it?

The Tenth Psalm asks the question, why does God hide himself in times of trouble? It seems that wicked people persecute the poor by their schemes. Those greedy for gain curse and renounce the Lord, thinking that there is no God to punish them. They brag about how they get what they want and think that they will never be judged for their crimes. Do we sometimes think that God has hidden himself in troublesome times? Do we, like the psalmist, call on God to deal with wicked people? Do we ask him to give justice to those who are oppressed? Or do we ignore their plight if everything is going well for us?

Paul wrote to Timothy that he should do his best to present himself to God in a way that God would approve. He should work in such a way that he has nothing to be ashamed of as he handles God's word in the right way. He should not argue about words and avoid stupid controversies. They only lead to quarreling. Do we live our lives in the way that Paul urges? Do we avoid controversies and quarreling?

July 20

The Twelfth Psalm lists three sins of the mouth: one that tells lies, lips that are flattering, and a tongue that makes great boasts. James says that the tongue is untamable, a restless evil, and full of deadly poison. We can easily hurt others by what we say. Do we tell lies to hide the truth? Do we flatter people to get our way? Do we brag about who we are and what we have done as if we can forget the help of both God and others?

The Fourteenth Psalm is one of two that tells us that it is a fool who says, "There is no God." Denying the existence of God leads to a life where one tries only to please oneself. The psalm says that such people are corrupt and do abominable deeds. Ultimately the fool will be in terror for he or she will have to answer to the God which they say does not exist. Do we believe that God exists? Do we put our trust in him?

The Fifteenth Psalm lists the qualities of those who want to dwell with God. God is pleased with those who live in a blameless way and do what is right. He wants people to speak the truth and not slander others. Such people will not do anything evil to their friends and not bring shame on their neighbors. They despise the ways of the wicked and honor the people who fear the Lord. They will keep an oath even if keeping it is going to end up hurting them in some way. They do not charge interest on money they lend to others, and they refuse to take a bribe. Do we live our lives in this way? Is our desire to dwell with God eternally?

The Sixteenth Psalm foretells the resurrection of Christ. Peter quotes from it on the day of Pentecost. It speaks of one who will not be left in Sheol (in Hebrew) or Hades (in Greek). That is the place where the spirits of the dead await the resurrection. The psalm says this person will not see decay. If a person's spirit is not left in the waiting place and their body does not decay, it stands to reason that such a person must have come back to life. That person is Jesus. Do we believe that Jesus came back to life and promises to bring us back to life when he returns?

July 21

In the Seventeenth Psalm, the psalmist (apparently David) complains that his enemies had no pity on him; instead, they spoke arrogant words toward him. But that was not the way that he felt toward them. He wished to be delivered from them, but he also asked God that their bellies would be full, their children would have more than enough, and there would be enough left over to feed their little ones. Jesus teaches us to love our enemies and pray for them. David sets an example for us. Do we love those who disagree with us and oppose us? When they ignore our troubles or actually cause us harm, do we pray for the best for them? It doesn't come easy, but it is God's will for us as his chosen.

David wrote the Eighteenth Psalm when he had been delivered from all his enemies, including Saul who wanted to kill him. It is also recorded in chapter twenty-two of the book of 2 Samuel. In it David says that God is his Rock and his Fortress. In ancient times when the enemy came, people in the countryside would run to the cities behind the rock walls for safety. The city would become their fortress. Do we turn to God in times of trouble? There is safety in his care. David says that for those who are loyal to God, God shows himself as loyal; for those who are blameless, God shows himself as blameless; and for those who are pure, God shows himself as pure. On the other hand, for those who are crooked, God shows himself as shrewd. There is only one God. How we perceive him is based on how we are. The Israelites in Egypt saw God as their good savior; the Egyptians saw him as an evil destroyer. How do we perceive God? Is he loyal, blameless, and pure to us?

The Nineteenth Psalm says that the heavens tell of the glory of God and the expanse of the sky proclaims his handiwork. When we look at the sky, especially at night, do we see the magnificence of God's creation? The modern myth makers say that all of this exploded into being of itself—they know not really why. The variety and complexity of it all testify to a powerful Creator. Do we acknowledge that God is the one who created the heavens and the earth?

July 22

The Nineteenth Psalm has inspired a number of songs in English. Verses seven through eleven and verse fourteen are the most notable. The psalmist speaks of the things that God has given us. These are spiritual things, not physical. He says that God's perfect law revives the soul, that his sure decrees make those who are simple wise, that his right precepts make joy in the heart, that his clear commandment gives light to the eyes, that his pure fear endures forever, and that the ordinances that he gives are both true and righteous. These spiritual things are more desirable than much pure gold, an item that the world seeks after. They leave a sweet taste in the mouth more than honey and honeycomb. Do we seek after God's law, decrees, precepts, commandments, and ordinances? They are found in the scriptures, and they produce a healthy fear of the Lord. The psalm ends with a request to God that the words that come out of the mouth and the meditation of the heart will be acceptable to God. What do we meditate on? Is it God's word? What kind of words come out of our mouths? Are they spiritual words?

The Twenty-second Psalm gives a clear prophecy of the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus called our attention to it when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" These are the beginning words of the psalm. The psalm says that people scorned and despised him; bystanders mocked him and shook their heads at his predicament. They shouted that God should deliver him if he is pleased with him. The one suffering says that he feels like all his bones are out of joint. His mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and his tongue sticks to his mouth from the dryness. Do we realize that all these things Jesus suffered on the cross? But the psalm does not end in tragedy. The psalmist says that God has rescued him. Thus, he will tell of God's name and praise God in the midst of the congregation. God did not rescue Jesus by keeping him from dying; rather, he rescued him by bringing him back to life on the third day. That was a much more dramatic rescue. It was the best documented event of the ancient world. Do we believe that God brought Jesus back to life? He promises to do the same for us!

July 23

The Twenty-third Psalm is perhaps the most famous of the psalms. In it God is portrayed as our Shepherd. Because of his care, we lack nothing that is really important. Oh, yes, there are many things in the world that we do not have; some have fewer things than others. But when it comes to what is really important, we are not in want. Do we find contentment in what God has given us? Paul said that he had learned to be content, no matter how much he had, whether he had abundance or little. Can we say the same? The psalm says that God provides us with green grass in the pasture and water to drink. He nourishes our souls. He leads us along right paths. There are many paths in this world. So many of them lead to harm, heartache, and destruction. Do we follow the path that God has laid out for us? Jesus has set us an example of how to walk down that path. He has gone before us. In this life, there are dark valleys full of evil. God is with us even in those shadowy valleys. His rod and staff are for guidance and protection, and we are comforted. Are we afraid of the evil in this world? Or do we find comfort in God's guidance and protection? Those who oppose us see the blessings that God gives us. Anointing is a sign of blessing; so are a full cup and a spread table. Our lives are blessed with God's goodness and mercy. Do we realize the blessings that God gives us? Do we want to dwell with God in his house all our life long?

The Twenty-fourth Psalm lists the qualities of those who will stand in God's holy place. They are people with hands cleansed from sin and who have a pure heart. They do not worship false gods. Paul says that greed is a kind of idolatry. They do not deceive others, even to the point of taking an oath. Are we this kind of people? Do we seek God's face?

The psalmist in the Twenty-fifth Psalm asks God to make him know God's ways. He wants to be taught about God's paths, the roads that God wants us to travel on. He asks to be led in God's truth. He says that God teaches the humble his right way of steadfast love and faithfulness. Do we want to walk down that road with God?

July 24

The Twenty-seventh Psalm says that God is our light, salvation, and refuge. This means that we don't have to live in fear in this world. There are people who would wish to do evil things to us; there are times of war when many places are unsafe. But God is a protector, so we do not have to be afraid. Do we live in fear? Do we put our trust in God? The psalmist wants to live in God's house so that he can behold the beauty of God. Do we ever think about God's beauty? Certainly the world that he has created has beauty. Think about the colors of the sunset in the western skies. Think about the green valleys covered with forests. Think about those same valleys in the fall with their many-colored leaves. Surely the One who created all this beauty is beautiful himself. Can we imagine his beauty?

How do we imagine Jesus? Was he just a wandering preacher who had good things to say? The book of Hebrews says he was much more than that. He is the One who is Son; he brings God's message to us and acts it out. He is the One through whom God created the worlds. He is the radiance of God's glory. If we want to see God, we have to look at the Son; there we will see the light. He is the very image of God's being. That which God is, he is, because there is only one God. More than that, he is the One who made purification for our sins. He is much greater than any angel. The angels are told to worship him. His throne lasts forever. He is called God in the scriptures. Do we, like the angels, worship him? Do we realize his true greatness? The angels have been sent to serve us because of him. He is the reason that we will inherit salvation. Do we thank him for this?

The Law of Moses was given through angels. It contained a list of do's and don'ts with punishments prescribed for lawbreakers. Those to whom it was given were saved from slavery in Egypt. But we have an even greater salvation, one from sin. It was declared by Christ, and God confirmed it by signs and wonders and gifts of the Spirit. The writer of Hebrews warns us not to neglect this salvation that cost Jesus his life!



July 25

The psalmist in the Thirty-first Psalm complains that when things go wrong in his life, his adversaries scorn him, his neighbors are horrified at him, his acquaintances dread to see him, and those on the street flee to get away from him. Have you ever felt that everyone is turning against you? The psalmist says that God is still with him. More to the question: when bad things happen to other people, do you ignore them? Sometimes we are the hand of God to help those in need.

In Romans chapter four Paul quotes from David in the Thirty-second Psalm. There David says that those whose transgression is forgiven are happy. Their sin is covered over, and God does not count their iniquity against them. It is God who takes away their sin; people cannot remove their own sin. So he is to be praised for forgiveness. David says that when he kept quiet about his sin, his body wasted away. Finally, he acknowledged his sin to God. When he confessed his transgression to the Lord, God forgave him of the guilt of his sin. Do we confess our sins to God? The apostle John says in his first letter that when we do so, God is faithful to forgive our sins and cleanse us from unrighteousness.

The Thirty-third Psalm says that the heavens were made by the word of the Lord, and all of their contents came from the speech from his mouth. Do you believe that God made the universe and its contents? Or do you think it was the random product of a huge explosion? The psalmist says that the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him. Sometimes we use the phrase that God is watching everything we do to scare people into obeying. For the psalmist the eye of God is not a scary thing but a comfort; God is watching over us to protect us. What does the eye of the Lord mean to you? Is it something scary or reassuring?

The writer of the book of Hebrews says that Jesus was made like people in every respect so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in God's service to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Are we thankful for his mercy and sacrifice for our sins?

July 26

The Thirty-fourth Psalm lists characteristics that derive from the fear of the Lord. The result of these characteristics is a long life to enjoy good. The psalm says to keep one's tongue from speaking evil and one's lips from speaking deceit. James says that if one could control his speech, he or she could keep the whole body under control. The psalm further says that one should depart from evil, do good, seek peace, and more than seek it, pursue it. Are we people who control what we say? Do we endeavor to do good rather than evil? Do we chase after peace? The psalm further says that those who are righteous have many afflictions, but God rescues them from these troubles. It says not one of his bones will be broken. The gospel of John quotes this verse in reference to Jesus on the cross. The soldiers broke the bones of those crucified with Jesus, but not his bones. He was the righteous One afflicted on the cross for our sins, but rescued from death when God raised him from the dead.

The psalmist in the Thirty-fifth Psalm asks God to deliver him from his enemies. He says they repay him with evil for the good that he did. But he, on the other hand, treats them differently. When they were sick, he put on sackcloth and fasted. He bowed his head and prayed to God. He was grieved and mourned for them. Jesus teaches us to pray for our enemies. That is not the natural thing to do, but it is the right thing. Do we rejoice when something bad happens to our adversary? Or do we pray for them as Jesus says to do?

The Thirty-sixth Psalm describes those who are wicked. Deep in their hearts they think about transgressing God's law because they have no fear of God. They flatter themselves that their iniquity cannot be found out. They speak words of mischief and deceit. They no longer do good, and their actions are not wise. At night they think about how to do wrong. Their way of life is not good because they do not reject evil. Does this describe us? Or do we try to stay away from the way of the wicked? More than that, do we try to turn those who are caught in this trap of wickedness to the narrow road of following Jesus?

July 27

The psalmist in The Thirty-ninth Psalm said that he would guard his ways so that he would not sin with his tongue. He would muzzle his mouth when wicked people were present. Those who are wicked are known to twist other people's words to make them say things they did not mean. Do we twist other people's words? Even worse, do we twist the words of scripture? Peter wrote that some people twist the scriptures to their own destruction. The psalmist said that as he was silent, he became distressed. His thoughts became like a fire inside him, and he had to speak. Jeremiah said that he had to speak God's word; it was like a fire burning in his heart. Does the truth burn in our hearts like a fire that makes us want to speak out?

The Fortieth Psalm says that God does not desire burnt offerings and sin offerings. How can this be when God gave those commands to Israel through Moses? What God wants is obedience, not sacrifices to take away disobedience. The psalmist says, "Here I am." This is the same thing that Isaiah said when God asked who would go for him. Do we answer God's call with a "Here I am"? The psalmist continued to say that he delighted to do God's will because God's law was written in his heart. What is written in our hearts? Is it God's law? Do we delight in doing God's will? This psalm is quoted in the book of Hebrews in reference to Jesus. He set an example for us by doing God's will. Do we follow his example?

The Forty-first Psalm says that those who remember the poor are happy. The Lord will protect them in the day of trouble. In the book of Galatians, Paul was asked to remember the poor. He said that he was pleased to do so. Jesus said that when we help people with acts of charity, we should not do so in such a way to call attention to what we are doing. It is enough that God sees what we are doing. He further said that we will always have the poor with us, and we can help them whenever we want to. Are we concerned about those who have less than what we do? Do we try to help them in many different ways?

July 28

Do you ever feel like God has forgotten you? The psalmist in the Forty-fourth Psalm had that feeling. The psalmist calls on God to wake up and get up. He wants to know why God is asleep and hiding his face. He wonders if God has forgotten his troubles. Others make fun of those troubles, but he has not forgotten God. He says that his people are being killed all day long like sheep led to the slaughter. This verse is quoted in the eighth chapter of Romans about the persecution of Christians. But Paul writes that nothing can separate us from God's love. Do we realize that God still loves us even when it seems to us that he is slow to answer our prayers? He is not asleep. His justice will prevail.

The Forty-fifth Psalm is quoted in the beginning of the book of Hebrews in reference to Jesus. In it, he is the king who is addressed as God; it says that his throne will last forever. He loves righteousness and hates wickedness. God has anointed him to be greater than all those around him. That is why he is called the Christ, that is, the Anointed One. Do we realize that Jesus is our king, and we are his subjects? Do we work to expand his kingdom? Do we look forward to his heavenly kingdom?

We go to a football game and stand up and clap when our team scores. Someone is honored in an assembly and we clap, maybe coming to our feet. The Forty-seventh Psalm says that all people should clap their hands and shout to God with loud songs of joy. The reason for this is that God is awesome and a great king over all the earth. Do we honor God as we honor other individuals in our lives? Or do we keep quiet about him? Does he bring out our praise?

The psalmist in the Forty-ninth Psalm says that he will not fear when oppressed by the powerful who trust and boast in their riches and wealth. They cannot ransom their life with their money; that ransom costs too much. The psalmist says that when they die, they cannot take their wealth with them even if their money makes them happy on earth. Do we trust in our riches to make us happy rather than in God?

July 29

In the Fiftieth Psalm God speaks to the people of Israel. He made a covenant with them, but many were wicked. They offered the prescribed sacrifices, but hated discipline and associated with other sinners. He says that he doesn't rebuke them for offering the sacrifices, but he will not accept them. He doesn't need their offering of bulls and goats because all the wild animals of the forest and the cattle on a thousand hills belong to him. He doesn't need to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the sacrifices; he wouldn't tell them if he were hungry. The kind of sacrifices he wants are those of thanksgiving and the completion of their vows. When they are in trouble, he wants them to call on him so that they will praise him for his deliverance. When he is silent about their sins and doesn't rebuke them right away, they assume he accepts them, but the day of his rebuke is coming. Do we focus on the externals of worship, but live lives of personal sins? Do we thank God for his care of us and praise him for deliverance? Do we presume upon his silence that he is pleased with us? Do we forget about judgment?

The Fifty-first Psalm tells of David's repentance after being confronted by the prophet Nathan about his sin with Bathsheba. He asks God for mercy based on God's steadfast love and abundant mercy. He wants his transgressions blotted out, his iniquity washed away, and his sin cleansed. He confesses that he realizes his transgressions and can't stop thinking about his sin. His sin is basically against God alone, and God is right in his judgment of that sin. He wants God to wash him clean so that he can be happy once again. He asks God for a clean heart and a new and right spirit within him. He pleads that God will not take his Holy Spirit from him. He wants the joy of God's salvation restored to him. He promises that he will teach other sinners God's ways so that they too will return to him. He says that the sacrifice that God wants is not a burnt offering, but a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart. How do we respond when we realize our sins? Do we confess our faults to God? John writes that God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins. Are our hearts broken and contrite? Is our proud spirit broken?

July 30

The Fifty-third Psalm states that there is no one who does good. This is quoted by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans. He makes the point that both Gentiles and Jews are sinners; no one lives up to God's standard. When Jesus was asked by the rich young ruler what good deed he could do to inherit eternal life, Jesus replied that only God is good. Do we think of ourselves as good, righteous people? Do we try to be saved by living right and doing good deeds? Or do we depend on the death of Jesus as our sacrifice for sins? Do we have faith in him? We should live right and do good deeds. God calls us to that. But we must realize that our relationship to God is based on what he has done in Jesus, not on our own righteousness and goodness. Do we praise God for what he has done for us in Jesus?

The book of Hebrews says that Jesus is our high priest. Now a Jewish high priest would enter the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) and offer first a bull for his own sins and then a goat for the sins of the people. But Jesus, who was of the tribe of Judah, not the tribe of Levi, could not be a Jewish high priest. So Hebrews says that he was a priest after the order of Melchizedek. He entered, not into an earthly Most Holy Place in a tabernacle or temple, but into the true Most Holy Place, heaven itself. There he presented, not the blood of bulls and goats, but his own precious blood shed on the cross for our sins. It was not a presentation that was repeated year after year as on the Day of Atonement; rather, it was done one time for all time. The book of Hebrews says that those Jewish sacrifices were a reminder of sin and the blood offered did not really take away sins; however, Jesus' sacrifice of himself on the cross took away the sins of all of God's people, both past and future. There is no need for any other blood offering. This sacrifice gives us confidence to approach God with a true heart in full assurance of faith. So we need to meet together to encourage one another to love and do good deeds. Do we have faith in that sacrifice of Jesus on the cross? Do we thank him for it? Do we meet with fellow believers to encourage one another? If not, why not?

July 31

The psalmist in the Fifty-ninth Psalm asks God to deliver him from his enemies. However, he does not ask for his enemies to be killed. He says that if they are killed, people may soon forget about them. Rather, he wants to have them removed from their high position. He asks God to bring them down by his power. He wants the words from their mouths uttered in their pride to be a trap for them. The lies that they tell should consume them. The psalmist doesn't take vengeance himself; instead, he asks God to show his power over his enemies. God says that revenge belongs to him. He is the only one who knows how to do it right. How do we treat our enemies? Do we want them killed? Jesus says we should love our enemies and pray for them. Do we want to take revenge ourselves? Do we trust God to deliver us from our enemies?

The book of Hebrews says that having faith is being assured about the things that are hoped for and being convinced about the things that haven't been seen. It also says that a person cannot please God without faith; he or she must believe that God exists and that God rewards the people who seek him. To illustrate what it means to have faith, the author tells of several people in the Old Testament who had faith in God. God told Noah about a flood that was coming and an ark that he needed to build to escape that flood. Noah had never seen such a flood, but he believed God and built the ark like God asked him to do. In doing so, he saved his life and the lives of his family. In the same way, God called Abraham to leave his home and travel to a distant place where he had never been. He promised that he would give that distant land as an inheritance for his family. Abraham made that journey on the faith that God would keep his promise. He lived in tents because he was looking for a permanent city, one in a homeland not on this earth, that is, a heavenly homeland. Moses was told to keep the Passover and put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts to save the people from the destroyer of the firstborn. By faith the Israelites did so and were saved. God tells us to follow Jesus, and he will raise us from the dead just as he did Jesus. Do we have the faith to believe his word and follow Jesus?