

November 1

The book of Lamentations contains five poems that are meant to be sung as laments over the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon. The stanzas of four of the five are in alphabetic order, with the first letter of each verse being in the order of the Hebrew alphabet. The middle poem has three verses for each letter instead of just one. The final poem is not alphabetic. The first poem says that God is the one behind the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of its people. The Lord is the one who has made Jerusalem suffer for the transgressions of its people. He has brought sorrow on the people because of his fierce anger. This anger was because of the people's sins. The people's transgressions became a yoke that God fastened together and put on their necks; they sapped strength away from the people. But the poem says that God was in the right to punish the people because they rebelled against God's word. Do we realize that when we rebel against God's word, our sins become yokes around our necks that weigh us down and sap our strength? The poem asks God to deal with the attackers in the same way that he had dealt with the inhabitants of Jerusalem because of their evil deeds when they destroyed the city. The Jews could no longer retaliate and had to depend upon God's vengeance. But that is the way it is supposed to be. God says vengeance belongs to him. Do we ask God to take revenge, or do we try to take it ourselves?

Luke tells us that the priest Zechariah, the father of John the Baptizer, had been praying for a child. Since he was older when the angel Gabriel appeared to him, one can imagine that those prayers had gone on for some time. The angel brought good news that God had heard his prayers, and so his wife Elizabeth was going to bear a son for him. Apparently God's delay in answering those prayers had caused Zechariah to lose faith that they would be answered. He asked the angel how he could know this was true since he and his wife were old; because of his unbelief he was made unable to speak until it came true. Do we pray in faith that God will answer our prayers? Do we lose patience with God when he delays in answering our prayers? Do we lose faith?

November 2

The second poem in the book of Lamentations recognizes that God was behind the destruction of Jerusalem. It says that he has become an enemy of Zion. He has destroyed his tabernacle, that is, his temple, and abolished the keeping of festivals and Sabbaths. Priests along with kings have been spurned in his fiery indignation. God has scorned his altar where sacrifices were made and disowned his sanctuary. The Jews were a religious people, doing all the religious rites. But they were not keeping the commandments that had to do with personal morality, neither the Ten Commandments nor the two that Jesus called the greatest. Are we caught up in keeping the religious activities that surround church but letting our own morality be lacking? The religious rites of the Law of Moses are different from what the New Testament teaches about worship and assembly at church. However, the principle taught here applies just the same. If we keep the corporate commandments but disobey the personal ones, how can we hope to escape the fiery indignation of God? He wants us to keep both.

The third poem contains verses that have made it into a modern song. They say that God's steadfast love and mercies are endless and will never cease. Every morning we see them anew. God's faithfulness is great, and he is our portion in life. That is why we put our hope in him. Some people see their land or their family or their job or their possessions or their influence, to name a few, as their portion in life. Jesus says that we cannot put any of these things before him; he must be first in our life. Do we have the Lord as our portion in life? The poem continues to say that the Lord is good to those who wait on him, to those who seek him. Jesus says to seek and we will find. The question is, how quickly do we give up seeking? Do we wait for the Lord to do good for us while we are seeking? Or do we not have the patience to wait? The poem says to wait quietly for God's salvation. It continues to say that it is good to bear the yoke when one is young; it is good to sit in silence when the Lord puts a yoke on us. Are we willing to bear the yoke and sit in silence when God calls us to do so?

November 3

The third poem meant to be sung as a lament in the book of Lamentations says that a person's commands cannot be carried out unless it is part of the will of God. God is the one who decrees both good and evil. Therefore people cannot complain when they are punished for their sins. We usually think about the goodness of God. Jesus says that God sends the sunrise and the rain on both good and evil people. All the blessings that we have come from God. But that does not mean that God cannot bring evil on those who disobey. When the Israelites were rescued from Egyptians slavery, they thought of that event as good. The Egyptians enslaving them thought of the same event as evil. The Israelites who suffered the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon thought of that destruction as evil. It was punishment for the sins of the people. But it came on those who were trying to do God's will, like Jeremiah and Baruch, as well as on the sinners. Sometimes sin is so widespread that the good suffer the punishment of the majority. Lot lost all he had, including his wife, in the destruction of Sodom. He was, however, rescued with his life because of his righteousness. Do we suppose that we can live in the midst of people working evil and not be subject to the punishment that comes on them? If this happens, will we blame God or say that he is just? The third poem continues to say that we must test and examine our ways and return to the Lord. We must lift up our hearts as well as our hands in prayer to God. Do we test and examine our ways before God?

The fourth poem in Lamentations tells of the starvation that happened in the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The poem says that the punishment of famine was worse than the destruction of Sodom because that event was over quickly while the famine took time to kill. The famine was so severe that mothers refused to feed their children. Some even boiled their children and ate them. God had said in the book of Deuteronomy that this is what would happen to his people if they turned against him. The people had ignored his warning. Do we suppose that we can ignore God's warnings of punishment and still be saved?

November 4

The fifth poem in the book of Lamentations is a lament about all the bad things that had happened to the people of Judah and Jerusalem in the destruction by Babylon. But toward the end of the poem, it turns to praise God. It says that the Lord reigns forever; his throne endures throughout all generations. Then it asks God to restore his people as it was in days of old. When bad things happen to us, it is easy to mourn and talk about how bad things are. But do we also praise God? Or do we blame him for the bad things that happen in our lives? If we praise him as the unchanging one, then we have the right to ask him to restore us to the way things used to be.

Ezekiel was a priest that was taken off into Babylonian captivity along with King Jehoiachin. It was in the fifth year of that exile that God began to use Ezekiel as a prophet. The call of Ezekiel to be a prophet was a vision of God in his majesty. The vision began with a cloud that looked like it had fire in it. Then he saw four strange creatures that he would later name as cherubim. These were not little cherubs with a bow and arrow. They sort of looked like humans, but they had four faces and four wings and straight legs with hooves for feet. In front they had a human face with a lion's face on the right and an ox's face on the left with an eagle's face in the rear. Their bodies were like bronze and they had hands under their wings. As they flew, they were accompanied by wheels. Above them was a crystal dome with a sapphire throne above that. On the throne was a vision of God as a being with human form but with amber color and fire all around. The Being shone with glory and splendor. The majesty of the vision reminds one of Isaiah's vision of God on a throne surrounded by six-winged fiery creatures called seraphim and John's vision in Revelation of four living creatures around the throne of God. How do we envision God? Do we see him as a king on his throne? Is he the king of our life? If he is king, then he is to be obeyed. Do we envision the majesty of God? Ezekiel wrote about his vision of God's splendor and majesty. Do we share our stories of God's majesty with others?

November 5

When Ezekiel saw the vision of God, he fell to the ground on his face, but God told him to stand up on his feet. He said he was sending Ezekiel to the people of Israel. They were a nation of rebels whose ancestors had transgressed against him. God said they were a stubborn people, but Ezekiel was to speak to them whether they listened or refused to listen. If they spoke back to him, he was not to be afraid of their words. God knew that they were a rebellious people. Do we listen to God's word? Or when he says to do something, do we rebel against him? Are we stubborn and want to continue in our own ways? If we know what God's word says, do we tell that word to others, even if they want to hear it or not? They need to hear it.

In a vision, God gave Ezekiel a scroll with words written on both the front and the back. It contained writings of lamentation and mourning and woe. God told him to eat the scroll, and when he did, it was sweet as honey in his mouth. Is God's word sweet to us when we consume it? Even when we read words that should lead us to godly sorrow and repentance, do we find it sweet to our taste?

God called Ezekiel to be a watchman for Israel. He was to warn the people about destruction if they didn't repent. They would be destroyed if they didn't repent whether Ezekiel warned them or not, but Ezekiel would be held responsible if he failed to warn them. However, if he warned them and they repented, both he and they would be saved. Do we warn the people who are sinning that they need to repent? If we fail to do so, how will they know that God expects them to repent?

Ezekiel was instructed to play out the siege of Jerusalem. He was to make a model of the city and lay siege to it. He was to ration how much bread and water he could eat and drink each day. He was to cut his hair and burn a third in a fire, hit a third with a sword, and scatter a third to the wind, saving only a few hairs in his belt. In this way he would make clear what would happen. Do we try to make God's word clear?

November 6

God told Ezekiel that he was going to destroy Jerusalem because the people of that city had rebelled against his ordinances and statutes. They had become more wicked than all the surrounding nations. They had defiled his sanctuary with detestable things. So, he would not have pity on them and spare them. They would die by disease, famine, and the sword. He was jealous of the worship they gave to false gods and would show his anger to them. He also gave Ezekiel a prophecy against the mountains and hills of Israel where they had built altars and burned incense to these false gods. He would break down the altars and take the people into captivity. Then they would know that he did not threaten them in vain. Do we rebel against God's ordinances and statutes and decide to follow our own ways? Do we find other things in life to give our attention to rather than worshipping God? Do we think that the threats and warnings in God's word are empty words? Does his delay in punishing cause us to ignore them? He doesn't warn us in vain.

God told Ezekiel that the people of Israel were doomed. There was violence in the land. And they were proud. He was going to take away their abundance, their wealth, and the striving for preeminence that existed among them. Any survivors would be moaning over their iniquities. Instead of pride there would be shame. They would throw away their silver and gold as being of no use to save them from the famine that would come on the land. Are we proud of our abundance and wealth? Do we strive for preeminence over our fellow citizens? Do we think that our wealth can save us in the day of trouble? When that day comes, will we have shame instead of pride?

When Jesus was in the wilderness fasting, the devil tempted him in several ways. He tried to get Jesus to use his God-given gift for his personal advantage. He lied to Jesus about the power and authority that he had. He twisted the scripture to make his temptation seem the right thing to do. How does the devil tempt us? Does he make us selfish, lie to us, and twist the scriptures to lead us astray? Do we resist him?

November 7

Ezekiel was sitting with the elders of the exile when he experienced a vision from God. In the vision God's Spirit took him to the temple in Jerusalem to show him what was happening there. He saw the glory of God in the temple above the four-faced four-winged living creatures that were called cherubim. God told him to look to the north, and north of the altar gate he saw the "image of jealousy." God was jealous that the people were worshiping an image in his temple. Then God had him to dig through the wall at the entrance to the courtyard. When he went through the hole he had dug, he saw drawings of all sorts of strange animals and idols on the wall. Seventy elders were burning incense in worship to pictures drawn there. Then God took him to the entrance of the north gate. There he saw women weeping for the fertility god Tammuz, who supposedly died in the fall and came back to life in the spring. Finally, God took him to the inner courtyard where he saw twenty-five men in front of the temple facing east worshipping the sun. God told Ezekiel that his wrath was coming on his people not only because of this idolatry in his temple but also because they had filled the land with violence. Then in his vision Ezekiel saw God call for executioners to come. Six men with weapons appeared along with one man with writing instruments. God told the man with the writing instruments to go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the forehead of everyone who sighed and groaned over the abominations in the city. Then the six men with weapons were to go behind him killing those without the mark. The glory of the Lord above the cherubim moved from the temple sanctuary to the east entrance gate of the temple complex. God was getting ready to leave his despoiled temple. We may find it hard to believe that people would worship false gods in the very temple of God. However, do our churches sometimes focus on things other than God? Do the churches sometimes serve as centers for politics, commerce, and even immorality? Is there violence in our land because people do not have the worship of God at the center of their lives? Are we people who sigh and groan over the things that God calls abominations? Will we have his mark of salvation, his Spirit inside us?

November 8

In Ezekiel's vision of the Jerusalem temple, he saw twenty-five men at the east gate of the temple, among whom were officials. God said that these were men who devised iniquity and gave wicked counsel in the city. They thought they were protected from disaster like meat in a pot which doesn't catch fire. God told Ezekiel that they were not like meat in a pot. They would be destroyed by the sword, and Ezekiel should prophesy against them. He did so, and one of the officials fell over dead. God said that the people left in the land of Israel were saying that he had given them the land, but the truth was that he was protecting those that had gone into exile, and he would bring them back to the land in the future. When the exiles returned, they would remove all the detestable things and abominations left in the land. God would give them one heart and put a new spirit within them. He would remove their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh so that they would obey his statutes and ordinances. They would be his people, and he would be their God. When God finished speaking, the cherubim lifted up the glory of God and carried him out of the city to the top of the mountain east of the city known as the Mount of Olives. God had abandoned the wicked people left in the city who thought they were protected by the city walls. Then the spirit carried Ezekiel back to Babylon in his vision. When the vision was over, Ezekiel shared it with the elders in the room. Do we suppose that those who devise iniquity and give wicked counsel will escape punishment? Do we have hearts of stone or hearts of flesh that want to obey God? Do we realize that God will abandon the wicked? Do we know that sometimes he exiles people to save them?

The people of God had sayings that he told Ezekiel he would do away with. They were saying that many days had passed and the visions of the prophets came to nothing. Or they were saying that the vision was for many years in the future. God said that these were the days of fulfillment; there would be no more delay. God often gives warnings way ahead of time to give people a chance to repent. Do we think that his patience means that he will not punish? That will not end well.



November 9

God gave Ezekiel a prophecy against the false prophets who were saying there was going to be peace. They were saying, "Hear the word of the Lord," but God said they were senseless prophets who followed their own spirit and had seen nothing. God didn't send them, but they were waiting for him to fulfill their prophecies. He said they had seen a false vision and uttered a lying divination. They were saying "Peace" when there was no peace. God said they were like people who build a flimsy wall and then put whitewash on it to make it look good. When the wind and hail comes, the whitewash does nothing to help the wall stand. God also told Ezekiel to prophesy against the women who were using sorcery to try to kill people. They too were giving prophecies, but the prophecies were products of their own imaginations. God was against them because they were disheartening the righteous falsely and encouraging the wicked to continue their wicked ways. God would make sure they no longer gave these false prophecies. Do we think we know the will of God when our ideas actually come out of our own imaginations? Do we look to his word to find out his actual will? Do we dishearten people who are living righteous lives? Do we support the wicked in their wicked ways as their rights?

When the elders of Israel came to Ezekiel to consult the Lord, God told him that he would not be consulted by them. They were holding their idols in their hearts and putting their iniquity as a stumbling block before them. He wanted them to repent, or else he would cut them off. He told Ezekiel that even if righteous Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land, they would save only themselves by their own righteous actions. Do we realize that we cannot be saved by some other person's righteousness (except Jesus)? Do we hold on to the things we worship instead of God? Do we let our sins become a stumbling block that we refuse to repent of?

God said he was going to send a fire on the wicked. They were like a vine whose wood was not useful. How much worse would it be when it was burned? Are we like solid wood or useless like the wood of a vine?

November 10

God told Ezekiel an allegory about Judah as his bride. He said that after Judah was born, she was abandoned, but God willed her to live. When she became old enough to be married, God loved her and took her as his bride. He entered into a marriage covenant with her. He provided a bath to cleanse her and anointed her with olive oil. He gave her fine embroidered linen clothes and leather sandals. He gave her all kinds of gold and silver jewelry, including a crown on her head. He provided her with tasty food, including choice flour, honey, and olive oil. She became as beautiful as a queen and famous for her beauty. However, she put her trust in her beauty and turned to prostitution with those just passing by. She used her clothing to make high places to prostitute herself there. She turned her gold and silver jewelry into images with which to prostitute herself. She offered the food that God provided for her to her new lovers. She offered her children to her lovers, and they devoured them. She forgot about what God had done for her in her youth. She made high places on every street corner as places to prostitute herself. She turned to powerful countries as lovers, first to Egypt, then to Assyria, and finally to Chaldea, that is, the region of Babylon. God said she was not like regular prostitutes that receive pay for their services. Instead, she gave gifts to her lovers to get their favors. She was just an adulteress who preferred strangers to her husband. So God was going to gather her lovers and expose her before them. They would destroy her, burning her with fire. In this way, he would stop her prostitution. This is a graphic analogy. Do we understand that when God takes us as his own, he expects us to be faithful to him? He regards unfaithfulness as a kind of prostitution. Are we faithful to God?

God told Ezekiel that the sins of Sodom were ones of pride. It had an excess of food and prosperous ease, but it did not give aid to the poor and needy. The people of the city were haughty in their arrogance, and they practiced sins that God says are abominable. Are we prosperous with more than enough, but refuse to share with those less fortunate? Do we take pride in the sins that God says are abominations?

November 11

God told Ezekiel that the then current king of Judah was a rebellious king. The king of Babylon had chosen him to be king and made a covenant with him, putting him under an oath of loyalty. This happened when Ezekiel and others, including the chief men, were taken away into captivity. Judah was left as a lowly kingdom without power. But the king of Judah had broken the covenant and violated his oath before God by sending ambassadors to Egypt to get horses and a large army to protect him from the king of Babylon. Since he had despised his oath before God, God was going to have him taken to Babylon as a prisoner. Do we keep our promises? Do we keep our vows, especially marriage vows? Jesus says that when we say yes, we should mean yes. We shouldn't even have to take an oath to be trusted.

There was a proverb used in the land of Israel: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Now while the things that fathers do affects their children, this proverb meant that the children were being punished for their fathers' sins. God said he was going to do away with that proverb. He said that the person who sinned would be punished. He told Ezekiel that if a man lived a righteous life, but his son lived an unrighteous life, only the son would be punished. And if that son had a son who saw his father's wicked way and lived a righteous life instead, only that father would be punished. The righteous living son would not be punished for his father's sins. God said that the person who sins would die. Children should not be punished for their parents' sins, and parents should not be punished for their children's sins. The Law of Moses had said the same thing. God also said that if an unrighteous person would repent and turn to live a righteous life, none of his transgressions would be remembered. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; he wants people to repent. In the same way, if a righteous person trusts in his righteousness and turns to sin, his deeds of righteousness would not be remembered. He would die unrighteous. Are we living the righteous kind of life that God expects? Do we hold a person's former sins against them if they repent? God forgives them.

November 12

In the seventh year of their exile, some elders came to Ezekiel to consult the Lord for them. God's answer was that he would not be consulted by them. He told Ezekiel that when the Israelites were still in Egypt, he told them to put away their idols, but they refused to listen and kept their idols. He thought about pouring out his wrath on them, but decided to bring them out of Egypt anyway for the sake of his holy name. He did not want it to be profaned among the nations. So when he brought them out of Egypt into the wilderness, he gave them statutes and ordinances so that they would worship him alone and not the idols they had brought out of Egypt with them. But they did not observe his statutes and rejected his ordinances. He again thought about pouring out his wrath on them in the wilderness, but decided to spare them for the sake of his holy name. He did not want his name to be profaned among the nations. Then he told the children in the wilderness not to follow their parents' statutes and ordinances, but to follow the ones he gave them. But the children also rebelled against him and did not follow his statutes and ordinances. Once again he thought about pouring out his wrath on the children. But he held back his hand from destroying them for the sake of his holy name. He did that so that his name would not be profaned among the nations. Now these elders that came to Ezekiel were doing the same thing as their ancestors. That is why God refused to be consulted by them. He said that they were thinking that they wanted to be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries around them. Do we listen to God and obey his statutes and ordinances? Do we live in such a way as to keep his name holy so that others will not profane it? Do we realize that God is angry when we disobey? Do we want to be like those who are around us? Do we take our values from God or those around us?

When Jesus explained the Parable of the Sower, he said that the seed sown on rocky ground represented those who believe for a while, but when temptations come, they fall away. Faith should not be temporary, but it can be. Giving into temptations can destroy faith. Are we people who hold on to our faith? Or do we let temptations to sin destroy it?

November 13

God told Ezekiel that he was going to bring a sword on the people of Jerusalem. He had tried to use the rod of discipline, but they did not respond to it. That is why he was now using the sword. The book of Hebrews talks about the discipline that God uses in chapter twelve. It quotes from the book of Proverbs to say that the Lord disciplines those whom he loves. Do we accept the discipline of God in our lives? If we refuse to repent, are we expecting God's sword instead of his rod?

God told Ezekiel that the king of Babylon was at a fork in the road and using divination to try to decide whether to attack Jerusalem or the city of Rabbah of the Ammonites. He said the divination would show Jerusalem. The city would face battering rams, battle cries, siege ramps and towers because of the guilt from the people's transgressions. The Ammonites thought that they would escape, but their sins would also bring punishment on them as well. Do we realize that God is in charge of uses of divination to bring about his will? He is the one who controls what happens in this world. If we think that the punishment of others lets us go free, we are thinking wrong like the Ammonites were. Jesus said that the people of his time were thinking that those who were killed when a wall fell on them were bad sinners. However, he said that if the people thinking this did not repent, they would perish also. Do we look at others' circumstances and judge them for their sins? Or do we take their circumstances as a call for us to repent lest the same thing should happen to us?

While Jesus was on his way to heal Jairus' daughter, a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years touched the tassel on his cloak believing that she would then be healed. She was healed, but Jesus stopped and made her tell everyone how she had been healed. We must not keep quiet about what Jesus has done for us. Strangely, Jesus did tell the parents of the twelve year old daughter of Jairus not to tell anyone when he raised her from the dead, but that could not be kept secret. Do we tell others how God has blessed us with answered prayer?

November 14

God told Ezekiel that the city of Jerusalem was full of bloodshed. He asked Ezekiel if he would judge such a city. Besides the shedding of innocent blood, he listed several other sins found in the city. Among them are: treating parents with contempt; extorting foreigners; wronging widows and orphans; committing lewdness; committing adultery; committing robbery; and oppressing the poor and needy. God said that he looked for someone who would put a stop to these sins but could find no one. Do we suppose that God was only concerned with a society that permitted such sins in the past? Is he not also concerned with modern societies that allow such to go on? Will he judge us?

God gave Ezekiel another lesson by allegory. He said he had married two sisters named Oholah and Oholibah. In the allegory Oholah represented Samaria, the capital of Israel, and Oholibah represented Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. The sisters had been promiscuous when they were young in Egypt. They continued their lustful ways after their marriage. Oholah had an affair with the Assyrians, and in the end the Assyrians came and destroyed her. Oholibah saw what happened to her sister, but she didn't learn a lesson from it. She had affairs first with the Assyrians and then with the Babylonians. God said that she too would be destroyed by her lovers. He asked Ezekiel to judge such adulterous women. Do we learn lessons from the examples of people who commit sins? Or do we follow their examples in spiritual blindness?

After Jesus had performed the miracle of feeding the five thousand, he asked his disciples who the crowds thought he was. They mentioned several people from the past: John the Baptizer, Elijah, or another prophet. Then he asked who they thought he was. Peter said that he was the Christ of God, the Messiah. After he replied that he must suffer, die, and rise again, he told them that anyone who wants to come after him must deny himself, take up his cross, and keep following him. He is not just looking for people to be saved but for followers to truly be his disciples. Are we willing to be his disciples who keep following him?

November 15

God told Ezekiel that his wife, the delight of his eyes, was going to die, and when she did, he was not to mourn or weep or shed tears. He was permitted to groan quietly at her loss. So when she passed away, Ezekiel did as he was told. People asked him why he was not grieving over the loss of his wife. He told them that God said when news of the destruction of Jerusalem and the people in it comes, it would be so overwhelming that they would act in the same way as he was doing. They would go around groaning quietly at the terrible news. Sometimes we think that if we follow God's will for us, nothing bad can happen in our lives. The truth is that bad things do happen to good people. However, when a disciple of Jesus dies, Christians do not grieve as those without Christ do. We realize that when Jesus comes again, he will bring his people back to life, never to die again. At death there is sorrow but also celebration of a life well lived. Do we get upset if bad things happen to us? Do we realize that God has better things prepared for us in the future? Do we look forward to the resurrection of the dead when Jesus comes again? Are we waiting and watching for him to come?

God gave Ezekiel prophecies against the countries of Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, and the city of Tyre. The Ammonites rejoiced at the destruction of Jerusalem. God said that they would be next; the king of Babylon would also come against them. They would be destroyed and in that way they would find out that the Lord is the true God. He said the same thing of the Philistines. It seems tragic that one would resist and reject God until it is too late. Do we accept God's will for our lives while we can obey him? Or do we put off obeying until it is too late to do so? The people of Tyre rejoiced at the destruction of Jerusalem thinking that the wealth that Jerusalem had in trading would now come to them. God said that King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon was going to turn Tyre into a bare rockbed. Do we rejoice when those we oppose have something bad happen to them? Jesus said that we should love our enemies and pray for them. Do we pray for those who oppose us? Or do we wish ill things would happen to them?

November 16

God gave Ezekiel a lament about the city of Tyre. He said it was like a beautiful ship sailing the seas. It was used in all sorts of trade of merchandise that gave it great wealth. Twenty-three countries that traded with Tyre are listed. But the ship was going to sink, and the seamen would mourn over it. The kings of the earth who had been enriched by its trade would also mourn at its shipwreck. Do we place our trust in our wealth and in our ability to gain wealth? Do we not realize that all good blessings come from God? Do we know that earthly wealth can easily be destroyed in a short time? Jesus says not to worry about what we will wear or what we will eat and drink. God knows we need all these things. We should seek God's kingdom and his righteousness first. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy that the desire to be rich leads people into a temptation that is a snare which ends in destruction. Are we caught up in the desire to be rich? Do we worry about the things that we need? Do we seek God's kingdom and his righteousness as most important in our lives?

God gave Ezekiel a prophecy against the prince of Tyre. He was very proud and thought that he was some kind of god. God said that he was just a man, not a god. He did have a kind of wisdom for business and had used that wisdom to gather a wealth of gold and silver into his treasuries. His ability in trading had increased his wealth, and this had made his heart proud. God said that because he thought he had the mind of a god, he was going to bring a terrible nation against him. He would die a violent death. God wanted to know whether he would tell those who killed him that he was a god. Do we get proud over our intelligence and achievements? Do we think that we are better than other people? The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians that everything we have has been received from someone or somewhere. He asked them why they were bragging about the things that they had received? Even our basic intelligence is inherited from our ancestors. Most of what we know comes from our parents and teachers. Ultimately it all comes from God. Are we thankful for what we have? Or do we brag about it?



November 17

God told Ezekiel to raise a lamentation over the king of the city of Tyre. The lament describes the king in metaphorical language. It says that he had the beauty of a cherub that was in Eden and on the fiery mountain of God. He was covered with gold and precious stones. At first he was blameless until he engaged in iniquity in his trading. In the abundance of his trading, he became violent and thus sinned. He became proud because of his beauty and corrupted his wisdom. He was unrighteous in his trading, so God cast him out of his mountain and exposed him before other kings. God sent fire on him and turned him to ashes. He thus came to a dreadful end. Are we proud of how we look? The book of Proverbs says that beauty is vain. It will sooner or later disappear. Do we let the wisdom that God has blessed us with be corrupted to increase our wealth? Or is that wisdom used to help other people?

In the tenth year of Ezekiel's exile, God gave him a prophecy against Pharaoh and all of Egypt. The Egyptian army had started to help Judah against the Babylonians, but they turned back and returned to Egypt. Although Pharaoh considered himself a dragon in the midst of the Nile River, God said he was like a reed staff that breaks when one leans on it. The Israelites in Judah had leaned on it and found that their legs gave way when it broke. So God was going to bring a sword against Egypt. It would become a lowly kingdom among the nations and never again rule over other nations. Are we people that others can trust in for help? Do we promise help that we are not able to give? Do we start to help and then give up? What will others think of us if that happens?

Jesus told a parable about a man who went to his neighbor at midnight to ask for bread to feed an unexpected visitor. Even though the neighbor was in bed with his family, the man continued shamelessly knocking at his door until the neighbor gave him what he wanted. Jesus said that we should keep asking, seeking, and knocking if we expect God to answer our prayers. Do we keep asking God for what we need? Or do we give up when he doesn't answer with what we want right away?

November 18

God told Ezekiel that he was going to send Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon against Pharaoh and Egypt. He would destroy cities from Zoan in the northeast Nile delta to Memphis and down the river to Thebes and the region of Pathros. Ironically, these were the areas that the people who escaped the destruction of Jerusalem would take Jeremiah and flee to, trying to escape from King Nebuchadnezzar. God said that he had destroyed the arm of Pharaoh. He gave Ezekiel a message for Pharaoh and his army. It was about Assyria, a former ally of Egypt. God said that Assyria was like a large cedar tree in Lebanon nourished by water. It provided shelter for the birds of the air and the wild animals. It became proud of its height. But as great and beautiful as it was, God gave it over to the prince of the nations, and it was cut down. He said that Egypt would be cut down in the same way. The country of Egypt could learn from the example of what happened to Assyria. Do we learn from the example of what happens to others when they become proud? Or do we have pride of heart that ignores the lessons from others?

Jesus told a parable about an unclean spirit that had possessed a man, but it left him. After a while, it decided to return to its old home. It found the man had cleaned up his life, but he was still empty. The spirit went and found seven other spirits, and they all entered the man, making his life worse than it was before. The point of the parable is that it is not enough to get sin out of one's life. One must also fill life with God's Spirit and the fruit it produces. Do we try to improve our lives, quitting our sins, without turning to God and serving him? Do we realize that without positive in our lives, they are merely empty? An empty life is a vacuum, and it will soon be filled with other stuff that is evil.

The Pharisees were exact at tithing. They gave ten percent all their gain, even of their garden herbs, such as mint and rue. But Jesus said that they disregarded more important things like justice and the love of God. These were the things to focus on, without neglecting the tithing. Do we focus on the important things in life as well as the external worship?

November 19

God told Ezekiel that he should mourn over the soldiers of Egypt. They were going to be destroyed by the sword and go down to the underworld known as Sheol or Hades, the place of dead spirits. There they would find the soldiers of Assyria who had fallen by the sword. While alive, they had spread terror in the land of the living. They would also find the soldiers of the region of Elam. These soldiers too had spread terror while they were alive, but now they bore the shame of defeat and death. There too were the soldiers of Meshech and Tubal. They had been a terror to those who were alive in their time. The kings and princes of Edom were there, having been killed by the sword. The princes of the north and the men of Sidon were there. They had spread terror in the land while they were alive. God said that Pharaoh would be consoled by all these leaders and soldiers who had died before him, for he and his men were not the only ones to suffer defeat. Countries may rise to power on the basis of their powerful armies that spread terror among those they overcome. But in the end other armies will arise to overpower them, and their glory will turn to the shame of defeat. Jesus said that one should not be afraid of those who can kill the body. The spirit lives on. He said that one should fear the One who has power to cast both body and soul into hell, that is, God. Do we fear the armies of the world? They are just temporary. But God is not temporary. Do we fear God? Do we show that fear by the obedient way we live?

Once again, God told Ezekiel he was a watchman for the Israelites who should warn them that destruction was coming if they didn't repent. He said that if righteous people trusted in their own righteousness and allowed sin in their lives, they would be destroyed. The idea behind this is the concept of balance scales: If we have done good, then a little sin is allowed as long as the good outweighs the evil. But that is not the way salvation works. God judges us on the basis of where we are at the end of our lives. He forgives sins if one repents and turns to obey him. Do we trust in our own righteousness and excuse our own sins? Or do we trust in what Jesus has done for us and follow his example?

November 20

God told Ezekiel that the people he was prophesying to were saying they wanted to listen to the word of the Lord that he was speaking. They would come and sit before him and listen to his words, but they would not do what he said God commanded them. They would use flattery on him, but their hearts were set on something other than obeying God. To them he was just like an entertaining singer of love songs. Is this how we listen to the preacher these days? Do we talk about what a great speaker he is? Do we say what wonderful sermons he brings? Are we in church just to be entertained? When he reads from God's word, do we really listen to what God is saying? Do we obey the message that we hear? Do our lives change for the better because of what we hear?

God gave Ezekiel a prophecy against the spiritual shepherds of Israel. He said the shepherds were feeding themselves instead of feeding the sheep. They were not healing the sick, caring for the injured, bringing back the strays, nor seeking those that were lost. Instead, they were ruling with force and harshness. They were not acting like shepherds, and so the sheep were being scattered. Those who were scattered had become food for the wild animals. God said that he was against such shepherds and would hold them accountable for his sheep. He would put a stop to these shepherds and rescue the sheep from them. If God has given us the leadership role of shepherds, are we using that role to help the sheep in our church? Or are we using that role to advance our own purposes and benefit? Are we healing those who are spiritually sick and injured? Are we seeking those who are lost and have gone astray? Are we guarding them from the false teachers who devour them like wild animals? God will hold us accountable. God further said that the strong sheep were pushing aside the weak sheep, dirtying the water and ruining the pasture. He would judge between sheep and sheep. He would be the shepherd. He would set one shepherd over them, his servant David, and make a covenant with them. This prophecy is fulfilled in the person of Jesus the Christ, who is a descendant of David and has made a new covenant with us. Do we follow this shepherd?

November 21

God told Ezekiel that he was going to return exiles to the land of Israel in the future, not for their sake, but for the sake of his holy name. They had profaned his name by their actions and worship of idols. But he was going to give them a new heart and a new spirit. He would replace their heart of stone with a heart of flesh. He would put a new spirit within them so that they would obey his statutes and ordinances. When he acted for the sake of his holy name, they would hate the sinful way they used to live. Do we hate our former sins? Do people profane God's holy name by the way that we lived? Do we have a softened heart of flesh or a hard heart of stone? Do we live according to God's Spirit within us?

God gave Ezekiel a vision of dry human bones. He told Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones to live. When he did so, the bones came back together and were covered with sinews, muscle, and skin on them. Then God told him to prophesy to the wind to have them live. He did so, and life came into them and they stood up. This vision was a parable about the Israelites saying that their hopes for return to Israel were gone; they were like dry bones. But God gives hope. His power is not limited. The people did return to the land, and the vision was fulfilled. But in a deeper sense, the vision says that God has the power to bring the dead back to life. He promises to do so when Jesus comes back. That is where our hope should be. Do we have the hope that death is not the end of life, that we will rise again when Jesus returns to earth? Are we looking forward to that time?

God told Ezekiel to take two sticks and join them together. One stick represented the southern tribes of Judah while the other represented the northern tribes of Israel. God said he would make the two peoples one and return them to the land of Israel. That happened for a remnant of the people. But many people remained hard-hearted. Later he told the prophet Zechariah to break a stick called Union, annulling their reuniting because of their unrepentance. Do we remain hard-hearted? If we fail to repent, we will not receive the promised blessings.

November 22

Chapters thirty-eight and thirty-nine of the book of Ezekiel contain a cryptic prophecy against Gog, the ruler of Magog, Meshech, and Tubal, which are described as being in remote lands. In it, Gog is told that in the future he will bring his army against Israel. Several other nations will join him in the attack. At that time the Israelites will be back in the land of Israel, and the country will be at peace with cities having overgrown their protective walls. This will happen so that God may show his holiness to the nations. He will be jealous for his people, and the earth itself will fight against the invaders with earthquakes and hail and lightning storms. The attacking nations will fight among themselves. The destruction will be so complete that it will take seven months to bury all the dead. It is difficult to know whether this is symbolic language to describe attacks against Israel during the period between the testaments or it is a prophecy still to be fulfilled in the future. But the point of the prophecy is that God is in charge. He is the one who brings the invaders, and he is the one who destroys them. He does this so that Israel will know that he is the true God. They will realize the shame of their sins and that they went into exile because of their treachery against God. Do we realize that God is in charge of what happens in this world? He is the one who decrees who wins battles. Do we recognize his holiness in the events of history and even current events? Do we realize the shame of our own sins?

When Jesus was asked about whether only a few will be saved, he said that we need to keep struggling to enter through the narrow door. That path is not an easy one. Further, the time will come in our lives when the door is shut and it will not be opened again. People will want to enter, but it will be too late. Are we looking for an easy way to follow Jesus? Are we putting off the struggle to enter the door? Jesus further warned against taking honor on ourselves. He said that if we should attend a banquet, we should not take a place of honor ourselves. That right belongs to the one who invited us. Do we see ourselves as worthy of honor and try to put ourselves forward? Honor comes from others.

November 23

Fourteen years after the Babylonians destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, God gave Ezekiel a vision of a new temple. The main rooms of the temple were the rectangular holy place in front of the square most holy place. The temple was surrounded by both inner and outer courtyards with large entryways called gates on the north, east, and south sides of each courtyard. Rooms were built on the inside of both courtyard walls as well as three floors of thirty rooms each surrounding the temple. The outer courtyard wall was eleven feet wide and eleven feet tall. Exact dimensions were given for every part in terms of long cubits, which were a handbreadth longer than a regular cubit. Ezekiel was to describe what he saw to the exiles to give them hope that a new temple would be built. There is some question as to what extent this plan was exactly followed when the temple was rebuilt on their return from captivity. But for us today, the important thing is that God is making us into a spiritual temple. God's presence is now in his people because of his indwelling Spirit in Jesus' disciples. The apostle Peter says that we are like living stones that make up this temple. Do we have the understanding that God's presence is in us and that worship of God is to take place in us?

Jesus told a parable about a man who prepared a great supper and invited many people to attend. When the meal was ready, people began to make excuses about why they couldn't attend. One had bought a farm that he needed to see, another had bought oxen that he needed to examine, and still another had married a wife. The man had his servants bring in poor and disabled people and those whom they found out on the highways so that his supper would be enjoyed. When God calls us, do we make excuses? Do we let our properties, our businesses, or our marriages get in the way of answering the call of God to follow Jesus? Jesus said that the people who come to him cannot let others get in the way. They cannot put father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, or even their own lives in front of him. Each one must carry his or her cross to be a disciple of Jesus. Do we put Jesus before the other people in our lives? He gave his life for us. Are we willing to give our lives for him?

November 24

Ezekiel continued to describe his vision of the temple complex including buildings on the west, north, and south sides of the central sanctuary. The whole complex was five hundred cubits square. Although the temple complex was later enlarged by King Herod, one can still see the five hundred cubit difference between the east wall and the remnants of the west wall. At the end of the description, Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord returning to and filling the temple just as he had earlier seen God's glory leave. This means that God responds to people's repentance. Those who go away from God can return to a relationship with him. This is also the point of the Parable of the Prodigal Son which Jesus told. If we go away from God, do we think that all hope is lost? Do we realize that God wants us to come back to him, and he will return to us?

Jesus told a parable about a dishonest manager who worked for a man. When the man found out that the manager had been wasting his goods, he told the manager to get his accounts in order because he could no longer be manager. While he still had the job, the manager made a plan to provide for his future. He called for his boss's debtors and discounted their loan accounts, putting them in obligation to him when he was out of work. In a twist that seems strange, Jesus said that his boss commended him for his prudence. How could this be since the boss suffered loss from this action? In the parable the man who is the boss represents God. The manager represents us as God's servants. We have all wasted time and resources that God has blessed us with. We will be called to give account of how we have used what God has given us on the day of judgment. While we still have life, we should use what we have to benefit others. That will be pleasing to God. Jesus went on to say that if we have not been faithful with wealth, no one will give us true riches. If we have not been faithful with others' possessions, no one will trust us with our own. The things that we have are just temporary, on loan from God for a time. How do we use those things? Can God trust us to use them to benefit others for his glory? If we are faithful, he will give us things that are eternal. Those are the things that we can keep.



November 25

God told Ezekiel in his vision about the temple that the east gateway was to be shut, and no one was to be allowed to enter the temple through it. That was because the glory of God had entered the temple complex through that gateway, which made it holy. The holiness of the temple was very important. Foreigners who were uncircumcised in heart and flesh were not allowed to enter the temple. Levites who had previously worshiped idols were allowed to work in the temple, but as a punishment for their sin, they were not allowed to serve as priests. Do we realize that God may forgive our sins, but there are still consequences for our sins? The Levitical priests who had not worshiped idols were to follow certain regulations to maintain holiness: they were to wear special garments while serving; they could not drink wine while serving; they could only marry a virgin or the widow of a priest; they were not to touch a dead body. The purpose of these regulations was to teach the people the difference between the sacred and the common. When God calls us to be holy, do we continue to live our lives like everyone else? Or do we follow the rules and regulations that Jesus lays out for his disciples? God told Ezekiel that the people should have honest weights and measures. Do we try to be honest in all of our dealings?

Jesus told the people the story of a rich man who enjoyed this life and a poor man covered with sores named Lazarus who sat at the gate of the rich man's house wanting to eat his leftovers. When the poor man died, angels took him to be by Abraham's side. The language implies he was sharing a meal with Abraham. When the rich man died, he found himself in tormenting flames in the underworld called Hades. He saw Abraham and Lazarus in the distance and called to Abraham to send Lazarus to put water on his tongue. He obviously didn't care that Lazarus would have to go into the flames to do so. Abraham denied his request saying no one could pass over the chasm that divided the two. Do we realize that our life in this world determines our fate in the life after death? Do we recognize those who need help in this life, but refuse to help them? Do we care about them at all?

November 26

In Ezekiel's vision of the rebuilt temple, he saw a stream of water trickling out of the entryway on the south side of the temple. The stream turned east toward the Dead Sea. The man who was his guide in the vision took him a thousand cubits (that is, between 486 and 597 yards, depending on whether regular or long cubits are meant) down the stream and he crossed the water; it was ankle-deep. They proceeded on down the stream for another thousand cubits, and this time Ezekiel found that the water was knee-deep. Another thousand cubits downstream Ezekiel was led through waist-deep water. A final thousand cubit journey brought them to a point where the stream had turned into a river so deep that it could not be crossed on foot; it was deep enough to swim in. Trees were growing along the bank of the river, and the man told Ezekiel that the river flowed into the Dead Sea. When it arrived there, it pushed the salt water into the surrounding marshlands and turned the sea into a freshwater lake full of all kinds of fish. Now the word water in the scriptures is associated metaphorically with God's Spirit. In some ways this can be seen as an allegory for the life of the Spirit. What begins as a small trickle grows into a deep river down the journey through time if the Spirit is not quenched and allowed to produce fruit in the disciple's life. When that river hits the sea of people who are spiritually dead, it becomes life-giving as the good news of Jesus is shared. Do we let God's Spirit produce his fruit in our life in an ever growing fashion? Does it turn into a sharing of life with others?

Jesus told his disciples that while he was going to be gone, people would be predicting his return, but they should not believe such reports. When he returned, it would be as obvious as the lightning that brightens the whole sky. It would be as obvious as vultures circling above a dead body. Just as in the days of Noah with the flood and of Lot at the destruction of Sodom, people would be eating and drinking, marrying, buying and selling, planting, and building, and that day would catch them by surprise. Are we caught up in predictions of his immediate return? More importantly, are we living holy lives ready for his return?

November 27

In Ezekiel's vision of the rebuilt temple, God told him of a reallocation of the land among the tribes of Israel. In the middle of the tribes was land for the city and the temple. On either side of that land was land for the prince of Israel and his heirs. God told Ezekiel that the leader of Israel was no longer allowed to take anyone's land from them. He had his own land that God had assigned him. Sometimes leaders use their power to enrich themselves and oppress others. Such was the case when Queen Jezebel took the vineyard of Naboth for her husband Ahab. Jesus says that leaders are supposed to be servants. If we are leaders, do we use our power to enrich ourselves at the expense of others? Or do we use that power to serve others? The city was described as being foursquare, forty-five hundred cubits on a side with three gateways on each side, each named after a different tribe of Israel. It is a similar description to the heavenly city in Revelation twenty-one. That city is also foursquare with three gateways on each side named after the tribes of Israel. But it is much larger, about fourteen hundred miles on a side. What kind of city are we looking forward to, an earthly one or a heavenly one?

When a rich ruler approached Jesus, he asked what he must do to inherit eternal life. Sometimes we rebel when told to keep God's commandments, but Jesus told him to do so; he listed five of the Ten Commandments. The man said that he kept those commandments. Then Jesus told him that he needed to sell his possessions, give the money to the poor, and follow him. He had addressed Jesus as Good Teacher because he thought that Jesus was good like he was. Being blessed by God with riches proved that to him. But Jesus had told him that only God was good. The ruler lacked one thing: following Jesus instead of his riches. That commandment proved hard to obey. His riches had a hold on him, and he could not give them up. It was good that he kept those basic commandments. But keeping the commandments cannot take away sin; only Jesus can do that. Does worldly wealth have a hold on us? Do we follow Jesus instead?

November 28

In the third year of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged and captured Jerusalem. He took some of the vessels from the temple back to Babylon with him. He also took several of the young men of royal and noble families with him to train them in the wisdom of the Babylonians and serve in his court. Perhaps the reasons he gave for their removal were a pretence for a true reason of guaranteeing the allegiance of Jehoiakim. Among the young men were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Daniel decided that he did not want to defile himself with the king's food, so he asked the palace master to let them eat vegetables instead. When he was denied, he asked the servant who was in charge of them to give them a ten day test and see how they thrived on vegetables. His persistence paid off, and when they passed the test, they were allowed to have vegetables instead of the king's rich food. When faced with legal and social barriers to doing what we believe is right, do we give in and do what we think is wrong? Or do we persevere in our aim to only do what we believe is right?

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that he wanted to know what it meant. He called for his wise men but refused to tell them the dream. Perhaps he was skeptical if they really could tell the meaning of dreams, for he threatened them with death if they failed to tell him both the dream and the interpretation. Although they protested that only the gods could tell him what his dream was, he was angry and planned to have them all killed. This meant that Daniel and his three friends would also be killed. Daniel asked for more time to learn what the dream was. He and his friends prayed diligently that God would give him a revelation as to what the dream was about. God answered their prayers by revealing to Daniel the dream and its interpretation. He then thanked and praised God in return. He then told the executioner not to kill the wise men because he would share the dream and interpretation with the king. When situations arise, do we pray like our life depends on it? Do we thank God when he answers our prayers? Do we think of others' safety when it is time to ensure our own?

November 29

King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed that he saw a great image with a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, midsection and thighs of bronze, lower legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with baked clay. The image was destroyed by a stone that was cut out, not by human hands, and hit the image, pulverizing it. Then the stone grew into a mountain. Daniel interpreted the dream to mean that the gold represented the king of Babylon, the silver the next kingdom, which was Medo-Persia, the bronze a third kingdom, which was Greece, and the iron a strong kingdom, which was Rome; the stone represented God's kingdom. Since the image was turned to dust, this means that all of these ancient empires would disappear, and that has happened. God's kingdom in Christ came into existence during the time of the Roman empire and now is found throughout the earth. What do we place our trust in? Do we hope that the world's problems will be solved by great countries? They are doomed to disappear like the wind blows the dust away. Do we place our trust in God and his kingdom? That is the only kingdom that can truly solve the world's problems, and it will endure always.

Although Nebuchadnezzar was impressed by Daniel's knowing his dream and interpreting it, he did not really like the interpretation. Only the head was of gold, and it was to be replaced by three other kingdoms and then destroyed by God's kingdom. So Nebuchadnezzar made a giant image ninety feet tall and nine feet wide all of gold. It seems that he was trying to make a statement that his kingdom would never be replaced. He ordered all of the country's leaders under him to worship the image under penalty of being destroyed in a fiery furnace if they refused. Sometimes governments set themselves up against God and want people to obey them rather than God. Daniel's three friends refused to worship the image even if God didn't save them, and they were thrown in the furnace. There God miraculously protected them from the fire, and the king was impressed with his power. Are we willing to obey God rather than the government when it sets itself against God? Are we even willing to die for obeying God? Jesus willingly died to save us.

November 30

Some people are slow to understand the power of God. Such was the case with King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. After Daniel told him his dream and interpreted it, he said that God was the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and the revealer of mysteries. After Daniel's three friends were saved from the fiery furnace, he blessed God and decreed that anyone who uttered blasphemy against God would be killed and their house destroyed. He said that no other god could deliver in this way. But still he was proud of his accomplishments, ignoring God. He had another dream from God which his wise men could not interpret. Finally, he called Daniel to interpret his dream. He had dreamed that a great tree that provided many benefits was cut down to the stump and sealed with a band of iron and bronze. A watcher came down from heaven and proclaimed that a man would live in the open fields with the animals and have dew on him for seven periods of time. He would thus learn that the Most High has sovereignty over all human kingdoms, and he gives the kingdom to whomever he wishes. Daniel was upset when he heard the dream, but he interpreted it for the king. It meant that the king was the great tree, and he would lose his position and his mind. Daniel advised him to change his way of life to one of righteousness and mercy for the oppressed. That advice went unheeded. A year later he bragged that this city was his great capital which he had built by his mighty power and for his glorious majesty. It was then that a voice came from heaven dooming him to lose his mind and eat grass like an ox. At the end of seven periods of time, he regained his mind and praised God. He blessed him and honored him and said that God's sovereignty was everlasting. No one could complain to God about what he does. It took quite a while for Nebuchadnezzar to come to this realization. Even so, it was not passed down to his grandson Belshazzar. While the city of Babylon was surrounded by the Median army, Belshazzar chose to drink from the gold vessels of God's temple while worshipping his own gods. Are we proud of our accomplishments? Do we brag about them? Are we slow to learn about God? Do we give God the glory and honor? Do we pass down what we have learned about God to our family?