



## *“The Rewards of Obedience”*

**Study:** Haggai 2:10-19

**Reading:** Joshua 24:14-28

**Memory:** Psalm 119:15

**W**hen my children were little, one thing I really wanted to teach them was that they would experience blessings when they chose to obey. Though I did want them to understand they would be punished for doing wrong, I wanted to place a greater emphasis on the rewards they would reap when they obeyed. I would try not to dangle a reward in front of them to bribe them to obey, but when they would make the choice to obey, I would attempt to make sure they understood the benefit of obedience.

Today, we will read how Israel was going to experience great blessings after they chose to start obeying God. We will be reminded of the importance of choosing to obey God in our daily lives.

### **What Does the Bible Say?**

Around two months after the last message to Haggai (2:1), God gave another message to Haggai telling him to ask the priests if holy meat would make other food holy if it came into contact with that food. When Haggai asked the priests this question, they gave him a clear answer of “No.” God then directed Haggai to ask a second question. This question had to do with a person who was ceremonial unclean after touching a dead body. The priests responded by stating that an item would be made unclean if it was touched by a person who was unclean. These two questions from God were meant to serve as an illustration to the people. Cleanliness can not be transferred to an unclean item, but things that are unclean could cause clean items to become unclean. The point that God was making was that their offerings were not making them clean, because their lives were defiled by sin. Though the people had been bringing their offerings to God before the work on the temple had resumed, they were living in disobedience. Their offerings were not being honored because they were not rebuilding as God had commanded. Though the people planted crops and expected bountiful harvests, they were getting very poor returns. God was withholding His blessing upon them because

they were not living in obedience to Him. God sent diseases and natural disasters to destroy some of their crops in order to get their attention, yet they failed to turn to Him in obedience (vs 10-17).

God wanted the people to remember this day. He wanted them to remember how their crops had failed to produce before this day, before they chose to obey and continued to work on the temple. This would be a significant day because from this day on, as long as they obeyed, they would experience the great blessings of God and their crops would produce in abundant ways. God wanted to use this time as a clear lesson to them that they would be rewarded for their obedience to Him (vs 18-19).

## **How Does this Apply to Me?**

A comparison of God's dealings with His people in the Old Testament with His dealings with His people in the New Testament reveals that in the Old Testament God gave physical blessings to His people for obedience and in the New Testament He promised spiritual blessings for His people. Spiritual blessings often include physical blessings, just as physical blessings often included spiritual blessings. You may not experience amazing physical and financial blessings today, but when you obey, you will find extraordinary spiritual blessings. God does not want your offerings or outward service to Him, just as God did not want their offerings that were impure. He wants your obedience to what He has called you to do. Take some time to let God reveal to you any area of your life where you are not living in obedience to Him.

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

- \* *Thank God for the rewards of your obedience.*
- \* *Ask God to help you make obedience to Him a priority in your life.*
- \* *Praise God because He has the power to reward or withhold.*

## **Thought for the day**

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How did God describe Himself (vs 11)?

Why do you think He described Himself this way?

Who did God want Haggai to question (vs 11)?

What question was he to ask (vs 12)?

What did the priests answer (vs 12)? Why did they answer this way?

What was the second question he was supposed to ask (vs 13)?

Why do you think God was asking these questions?

What did God say was unclean (vs 14)?

How can you offer an offering that is "unclean" today?

What time was God referring to (vs 15)?

Why did God want them to think about their prosperity before they obeyed (vs 16)?

Why is examining your past and the results of your choices vital to your spiritual growth today?

What did God say He was responsible for (vs 17)?

What did the people fail to do (vs 17)?

Why did God want them to mark the specific date (vs 18)?

Why do you think God emphasized for the Jews to think about what had happened before that day and what would happen after?

What had happened (vs 19)?

What was going to happen from that day forward (vs 19)?

# “Mercy on Jerusalem”

**Study:** Haggai 2:20-23, Zechariah 1:7-17

**Reading:** Hebrews 13:1-6, Romans 8:30-39

**Memory:** Psalm 119:15

I had the privilege of teaching all my children how to ride a bike. In order to learn to ride, each one had to choose to overcome their fear of falling. To accomplish this, I would run along side of them holding the bike to help steady them while giving them words of encouragement. I wanted them to know that they were safe and that they could do it. Though they each learned at their own pace, they all learned how to ride, overcoming their fears.

Today, we are going to see how God encouraged the Israelites to overcome their fears by reminding them how He was there for them.

## What Does the Bible Say?

God sent another message to Haggai on that very same day that was to be directed towards Zerubbabel who had been appointed as the governor of Judah. This was a prophetic message that went far beyond the current kingdom and has still not been fully fulfilled. God described how He was about to “shake the heavens and the earth.” The world as it was known then, and as it is known now will be completely different. The earthly powers of the nations will be taken away. The strength that was found in strong horses and great armies would not be strong enough to stop God’s plan. The world powers would be destroyed. In the place of earthly kingdoms, God was going to set Zerubbabel as a king. This was most likely not a reference to Zerubbabel himself, since we know he never became king, but was a reference to the Davidic line in which Zerubbabel was a part of. Zerubbabel appears in the genealogies given in Matthew and Luke. God had chosen to use him to carry out the promise that a king would come from the descendants of David who would have full rule over the world (Haggai 2:20-23).

Two months later, on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month, God sent a message to Zechariah. This message was in the form of a vision where he saw a man riding on a red horse. Behind this man were other horses which were three different colors. Zechariah asked what this meant and

there was an angel there who said he would give an explanation. The man who was on the red horse in the vision spoke up and described how these horses were sent by God to patrol the earth. They reported to the angel that the earth was at peace at that time (vs 7-11).

The angel then addressed God, asking Him how long it would be until He showed mercy on Jerusalem and Judah once again. His anger had been poured out on them for the last seventy years. Though some of the people had returned, there was little rebuilding done. God responded to the angel with gracious and comforting words. God described how He was very jealous for Jerusalem and that He was angry with the other nations who were living in comfort and ease. These other nations had inflicted more harm on Jerusalem than God had desired. As a result, God was going to pour out great mercy on Jerusalem, giving the people all they would need to rebuild the temple and to then begin the work of rebuilding the city (vs 12-16).

In addition to this, the towns of Judah would also be rebuilt and would overflow with inhabitants once again. The people would live in prosperity and know that they are the chosen people of God (vs 17).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

We read a few days ago how God used Haggai and Zechariah to stir the people up to finish the temple. The message the people were given helped them remember that God was on their side. Though they faced the opposition of the people around them and could easily find themselves living in fear, God wanted them to live without fear, trusting in His promises. God wants the same for you today. There are many places in His Word where He talks about His feelings towards you and wants you to know that He is on your side. It is easy to get the idea that God is against you when things don’t go your way, but it is at those times where you have to trust His Word. He is for you and wants to pour out His mercy and grace on your life. What He desires from you is your obedience to Him.

## Thought for the day

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## Haggai 2

Who was this message for (vs 21)? What position did he have?

What did God say He was about to do (vs 21)?

What would be overthrown (vs 22)?

Why do you think horses and chariots are mentioned (vs 22)?

*\*\*\*While we would say fighter jets, warships and tanks today, the horses and chariots were what gave an army a superior advantage.*

What was Zerubbabel going to be made to be like (vs 23)?

Why do you think God told Zeubbabel He had chosen him (vs 23)?

## Zechariah 1

What did Zechariah see in his vision (vs 8)?

What was behind him (vs 9)?

What did the horses (and presumed riders) represent (vs 10)?

What did they find when they patrolled (vs 11)?

What did the angel ask God (vs 12)?

What was the demeanor God used to answer (vs 13)?

What did God say about Jerusalem (vs 14)?

What did God say about the other nations (vs 15)? Why?

What was God going to do for Jerusalem (vs 16)?

What did God want His people to know (vs 17)?

Why is it so important to recognize your standing before God?

# “Working For The Future”

**Study:** Zechariah 1:18-2:13

**Reading:** Matthew 6:19-24, 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

**Memory:** Psalm 119:15

**W**hen I was 21, I went to a financial seminar which emphasized the importance of saving money for retirement. As a 21 year old newlywed, the thought of being 65-70 years old seemed so far off in the future that it was tough to choose to set aside money each month for a time that seemed so far away. As retirement age for me is becoming closer and closer, I am so thankful I was given a vision of setting money aside for the future. Though I never had much to set aside, I am much further ahead than many people my age.

Today, we are going to read how God was inspiring the Jews to keep working on the temple with the vision that they were playing a part in God’s master plan for the end times.

## What Does the Bible Say?

As Zechariah’s vision continued, He notice that there were four horns. There is no description about where the horns were, though we are told he asked what these horns represented. He was told that these horns represented the world powers that had scattered the nation of Israel. Zechariah then saw four craftsmen. Craftsman were people who worked with stone, metal or wood and could shape material with hammers or chisels. Zechariah wanted to know why he saw these men. The angel responded by telling him that these craftsmen were there to carve up the horns, removing their power from them because they each played a role in scattering Israel. It is not clear what nations the four horns represented. It could have been Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Medo-Persia who all played a role in the invasions of Jerusalem, but they could also be the four kingdoms of Daniel: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome (1:18-21).

As the vision continued, Zechariah saw a man with a measuring line in his hand. Zechariah asked the man where he was going and the man told him that he was on the way to measure Jerusalem. Following this, Zechariah saw the angel he had originally been talking to meet another

angel. The second angel was told to catch up to the man with the measuring line and reveal to him that Jerusalem would no longer have walls. God was going to be like a wall of fire that surrounded the people, keeping them safe (2:1-5).

At one time, the Jews had been spread to many different places, but now there was a call going out for them to come back to Jerusalem. Though God had raised up these nations to conquer Israel, God was going to cause harm to those who had harmed His people. The plunder they gained from Israel would be taken away from them and all the nations would realize that God was truly in control. He described Israel as being “the apple of his eye,” a term of great endearment for His people (vs 6-9).

The call went out for Israel to sing and rejoice because God would once again dwell with them. Other nations will want to be a part of what God is doing and will join the Israelites because God will be in their midst. Jerusalem would once again be a thriving city. One that was chosen by God. All flesh will be silent before Him because He will choose to act in great power and authority (vs 10-13).

## **How Does this Apply to Me?**

Though the work that Zerubbabel and the others were doing on the temple isn't the temple of the future kingdom, the description is a picture of hope. The rewards of their labor described in this passage point to the end times events, but by serving God in their day, they would have a part in making this happen. The same is true of you. By serving God today, you are helping form what eternity will look like for you. The New Testament tells us that we can store up treasures for ourselves in heaven. Though you may not always see results of your labor here on this earth, you can be assured that how you live today can make a difference for all eternity.

## **Suggestions for Prayer**

\* *Ask God to help you live each day with an eternal perspective.*

\* *Praise God because He will always be victorious.*

## **Thought for the day**

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What did Zechariah see (vs 18)?

What did these horns represent (vs 19)?

What had the four craftsmen come to do (vs 20-21)?

What was this a picture of?

What did Zechariah see next (vs 1)?

What was this person going to do (vs 2)?

What message did the angels want to tell the man (vs 3-4)?

Why would it be significant to have a city without walls?

What did God say He would be (vs 5)?

What had God done (vs 6)?

Where did God want the Israelites to go (vs 7)?

What did God say about His children (vs 8)?

What would happen to the nations that plundered Israel (vs 9)?

Why were the Israelites told to rejoice (vs 10)?

What will many nations do (vs 11)?

What would all people know (vs 11)?

What will God inherit (vs 12)?

What would God choose (vs 12)? Why?

Why was the earth called to be silent (vs 13)?

What message do you think God wanted the Jews to understand?

# “New Robes”

**Study:** Zechariah 3:1-10

**Reading:** Revelation 12:7-17, Luke 22:31-33

**Memory:** Psalm 119:15

**W**hen I was a junior high boy I went to a week long youth conference, but accidentally left my suitcase at home. The only clothes I had were the ones I was wearing. One of the lady sponsors on the trip took me to a J.C. Penny store and let me pick out three new outfits. I don't think I ever had new clothes before since I normally wore hand-me-downs. I wore those new clothes with great pride and felt like I was on top of the world wherever I went in my new outfits.

Today, we are going to read how God chooses to take our old sin stained garments and replace them with His pure garments. We will be reminded of the wonder of our salvation.

## What Does the Bible Say?

The next vision that Zechariah saw was Joshua the high priest standing before the “angel of the Lord”. Many commentators believe that this angel was the preincarnate Christ. Standing along side of Joshua was Satan who was attempting to accuse Joshua of wrong doing. The actual Hebrew word translated “Satan” is the word that literally means “Accuser” or “Adversary.” It is assumed that this was a picture of Satan. God rebuked Satan for his attempt to accuse Joshua of any wrong doing because God had chosen Joshua to help lead the rebuilding effort. God pictured Israel as “a brand plucked from the fire” meaning that He was sparing the nation from what was going to be certain destruction and annihilation (vs 1-2).

In this vision the clothes that Joshua was wearing were filthy. The angel (Jesus) told those who were standing near Joshua to remove the dirty garments that Joshua was wearing. This pictured the dirt of sin being removed from the land of Israel. Instructions were given for new garments to be placed on Joshua, which was a picture of the forgiveness that God had given to Israel (vs 3-5).

The angel confirmed his intentions to forgive and restore the people.

This restoration was the first step of a new beginning for Israel, but they were not to squander this chance by living their own way. God told them that if they chose to walk in His ways and follow His rules, they would have continual access to the throne of God. If Joshua made careful effort to lead the people into the proper worship of God, His presence would dwell among them (vs 6-7).

The temple worship was meant to be a prophetic symbol of what was going to come. God had plans to send “My Servant” and “the Branch” to earth to fulfill what the sacrifices and laws had pictured. These were both terms that referred to the Messiah. Joshua was instructed to look at a jewel that had been set before him. This was a “stone with seven eyes” This appears to be another symbol for the Messiah. Jesus was referred to as a stone many times in the Old and New Testaments. The seven eyes seem to indicate his ability to see all things and know all things. This stone would remove the sins of the world in one single day, the day he would die on the cross. This servant, branch and stone would “invite his neighbor” to sit and eat with him, which was a common expression of peace which would be fully experienced in the millennial kingdom (vs 8-10).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

This passage presents an amazing and symbolic picture that should encourage all believers. The nation of Israel was dirty because of their sin. They had done so many things to push God away from them, but His forgiveness extended beyond their actions. He was giving them a fresh start and wanted them to use this fresh start to follow Him and His ways. Your sins are like that dirty garment, but God in His love, chose to forgive you and to give you a new set of clothes. He remade you in the image of Jesus. He has saved you and cleansed you and now desires that you live for Him in purity and holiness. He has saved you to follow His ways and His desires. As much as Satan wants you to feel condemned because of your past sin, the mercies of God are new each day. Choose to live in this mercy and grace and choose to follow God's way today.

## Suggestions for Prayer

- \* *Thank God for removing your sin from you.*
- \* *Ask God to help you live boldly in your “new robes.”*

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Who did Zechariah see in his vision (vs 1)?

Who were the other main characters in his vision (vs 1)?

What was Satan doing (vs 1)?

How does he still attempt to do this today?

How did God describe Joshua and the nation of Israel (vs 2)?

What was Joshua clothed in (vs 3)?

What was this a symbol of?

What instructions were given (vs 4)?

What did God say He had done (vs 4)?

What was put on Joshua (vs 5)?

What was this symbolic of?

How did the angel of the Lord speak to Joshua (vs 6)?

What did God desire from Joshua and the nation of Israel (vs 7)?

What would God give them if they chose to obey (vs 7)?

Who did God say was coming (vs 8)?

What did He say was a sign (vs 8)?

What did He set before Joshua (vs 9)?

What was unique about this item (vs 9)?

What would God do in a single day (vs 9)?

What will happen when that day comes (vs 10)?

## *“By My Spirit”*

**Study:** Zechariah 4:1-14

**Reading:** Mark 11:20-26, Luke 17:5-6

**Memory:** Psalm 119:15

**W**hen my children were young, we used to do a lot of camping with our pop-up camper. We took a few long trips out West and several other smaller trips to local campgrounds. Our camper could operate on battery power or electric power, and whenever possible, we would hook the camper up to the electric power. That way we didn't have to worry about the battery going dead. We always had to be careful about how much power we used when running on the battery, but when plugged in, we had an endless supply of power.

Today, we are going to read how we can run out of power when we try to accomplish things on our own, but when we choose to let God's power work through us, our supply is limitless.

### What Does the Bible Say?

It is not clear how much time past between the visions that Zechariah was given, but we are told that the angel who had talked with him before came and woke him out of a sleep. The angel asked Zechariah what he saw and he explained how he saw a lampstand made of gold with a bowl sitting on top of it. Around this bowl he saw seven candles that each had seven wicks. He also noticed an olive tree on each side of the bowl. Everything that he saw was quite unusual and made no sense to him so he asked the angel what it meant (vs 1-4).

The angel almost appeared surprised when Zechariah told him he didn't understand what any of this meant. The angel described how this was a picture of the word of God which had been given to Zerubbabel. This picture was meant to teach that the rebuilding process would not be done with human might or human power, but would be done by the power of the Spirit of God. Any obstacle that appeared in the way of the Israelites would be removed by God, like the flattening of a great mountain. Zerubbabel would be given all he needed to finish the temple and when the last stone was laid, there would be great shouting and rejoicing among God's people (vs 5-7).

This vision was followed by another message about Zerubbabel. This

was meant to encourage him to complete the temple. He had started and then they had stopped for many years. God did not want someone else to complete the process, but He wanted Zerubbabel to follow through and finish to the end. God wanted to reveal His great power to them through this process. Though the work on the temple was a daunting task, God did not want them to despise the little things that were being accomplished each day. Though this temple may not have been as magnificent as the one before it, God had tasked Zerubbabel with leading the construction process. This was to be the work of God, not the work of men (vs 8-10a).

The seven candles pictures the eyes of God which had the ability to see everything that was going on in the earth. When Zechariah asked about the meaning of the olive trees he was told that they symbolized the two anointed ones who stood by God and were responsible for carrying out His plan. It appears that these were symbolic of the priest, Joshua at the time, and the governmental leader, Zerubbabel (vs 10b-14).

### **How Does this Apply to Me?**

Do you realize that God has the ability to use you to do great and mighty things? This might is not your might, but His power working through you. In the New Testament, believers are called to be the light of the world. This light is not produced by you, but is produced as you let the Holy Spirit flow through you. The light that would have been produced by the seven lamps with seven wicks would have been a bright and continuous light. The oil would flow out of the olive trees, into the bowl, and that olive oil would be used to keep the lamps lit. The human leaders were like the olive trees which had the ability to let the Spirit flow through them to keep the light of God shining brightly to the nation. God wants to accomplish things through you, and your part is not to do more for Him in your own power, but be obedient to His leading and let His power work through you.

### **Thought for the day**

What was Zechariah doing (vs 1)?

What did Zechariah see (vs 2)?

What was beside the lampstand (vs 3)?

What question did Zechariah ask (vs 4)?

Why do you think the angel responded the way he did in verse 5?

What declaration did the angel make (vs 6)?

How is this still true today?

Why is this so important to understand?

What did Zerubbabel have the power to do (vs 7)?

What promise/command was given in verse 8?

What would the people realize when this was accomplished (vs 9)?

What do you think the “day of small things” referred to (vs 10)?

Why had some of the Israelites complained about the new construction?

What did the seven candles represent (vs 10)?

What did Zechariah want to know about (vs 11)?

Why do you think the angel again questioned Zechariah (vs 12-13)?

What did the angel say these trees represented (vs 14)?

What do you think was meant by this?

How can you be like those trees today?

What do you think was the main point of this chapter?



# “Keep A Lid On It”

**Study:** Zechariah 5:1-11

**Reading:** Romans 6:1-12, 8:1-17

**Memory:** Psalm 119:15

**W**e try our best to keep the lid closed on the garbage can that is in our garage. There are some weeks when our garbage is quite smelly and every time I open the lid, a great stench fills our garage. As long as the lid is on, everything is okay, but once we open that lid, things get pretty smelly.

Today, we are going to read about the importance of keeping a lid on sin. It is easy to allow sin to get out of control when we choose not to actively keep it in check.

## What Does the Bible Say?

The next thing that Zechariah saw was a scroll that was flying. This scroll was a large scroll and was stretched open. It was around 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. That angel described how this scroll was filled with a curse that was going out to the whole land of Israel if they chose to not follow what was written on it. On one side it described how those who steal would be banished and on the other side the scroll condemned those who were liars. This curse was being sent to every house which put people on notice about the importance of honesty and truthfulness. It could be that the scroll contained more than just the two commandments, but that the whole law was written out and the commands mentioned were a representation of all the commandments. It appears that the purpose of this was to reveal the importance for the people to follow all the laws of God (vs 1-4).

The angel told Zechariah to look up to see what was coming next. When he saw something, it was revealed to him that he was looking at a basket that was used for measuring grain. The angel described how this basket was filled with all the sins that the Israelites had been guilty of. Once the lid of the basket was opened, Zechariah saw a woman sitting in the basket. The angel told him that the woman represented wickedness and he pushed her back into the basket and put heavy weights on the lid to keep her from getting out. Though an explanation is not given, it

appears that this was to represent the importance of keeping evil from getting out and spreading into the land (vs 5-8).

As he lifted up his eyes once again, Zechariah saw two women coming towards him. They had wings like that of a stork and they picked up the basket of evil and started to take it somewhere. The angel told Zechariah that these women were taking the basket to the land of Shinar where they were going to build a house for it to dwell in. This pictured how a temple would be built to be a great source of evil. Shinar was another name for Babylon. This picture appears to be looking forward to the final Babylon of Revelation 17 & 18. As Israel chose to suppress their sin and keep it out of the land, sin would re-establish its place somewhere else only to ultimately be destroyed at the end of time (vs 9-11).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

These illustrations were pointing out the importance for Israel to live in an opposite way of how they lived before they returned to the land. They were to choose to follow the law, knowing that their failure to do this would lead to their own destruction. Part of their responsibility was to continue to “keep a lid” on sin so that it would not have a chance to get out and spread throughout the land. The same understanding should apply to your life as a follower of Christ. You should do your best to keep God’s commandments, specifically when it comes to honesty and integrity. You must be extremely cautious that you do not allow sin to have its rule and reign in your life. The more you do to suppress sin, the easier it is to avoid it. Once you open that lid and allow it to establish residence in your life, you are headed for great trouble.

## Suggestions for Prayer

- \* *Thank God for reminding you how to avoid sin.*
- \* *Ask God to show you any area of your life where sin exists.*
- \* *Praise God because He can conquer any sin.*

## Thought for the day

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What did Zechariah see (vs 1)?

How big was this (vs 2)?

Why do you think it was so big?

What did the scroll contain (vs 4)?

Why do you think a specific mention was given to stealing and lying (vs 3)?

How are these common sins that are easy to fall into?

What was going to happen to the house of those who chose not to follow the law (vs 4)?

What did Zechariah see next (vs 6)?

How was this described (vs 6)?

What was on the basket (vs 7)?

What was in the basket when the lid was taken off (vs 7)?

Why did the angel push her back into the basket and shut the lid (vs 8)?

What do you think this represented?

How are the women in verse 9 described?

What did they do with the basket (vs 9)?

What did Zechariah want to know (vs 9)?

Where were they taking the basket (vs 10)?

What do you think this was a picture of (vs 11)?

What message was God attempting to give to His children?

Memory Verse:

*Psalms 119:1 Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! 2 Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, 3 who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! 4 You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. 5 Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! 6 Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. 7 I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. 8 I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me! 9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. 10 With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! 11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. 12 Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! 13 With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. 14 In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. 15 I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.*