

## Psalm 116-117, Nehemiah 4-9 (#90) Revised 2024

**Psalm 116** — This is a personal song of thanksgiving to God for deliverance from trouble. *Considering vv. 1-2 and 12-14, what do we have to offer God for His goodness to us?*

**Psalm 117** — This is a song of praise for God's steadfast love and faithfulness. *How has God been great to you?*

**Nehemiah 4** — When Sanballat, Tobiah, and others realized that Nehemiah and the people were actually going to build the walls and the gates, they became furious and began to heap insults and ridicule on the Jews. Sanballat and Tobiah, with the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites, plotted to invade Jerusalem and throw it into confusion. However, the people of Judah prayed and prepared themselves for an attack. Nehemiah organized a plan in case they were invaded and encouraged the people to be brave by remembering their great God, who will fight for them. He challenged the people to prepare for battle but also to keep on working until the walls and the gates are finished. *What steps did Nehemiah take to prepare for possible attack by the enemy? See verses 11 to 23.*

**Nehemiah 5** — After the threat of the invasion of Jerusalem from enemies outside, this chapter shows the internal dissension that takes place due to the way the rich nobles and businessmen were charging interest on their fellow Jews, even to the extent of foreclosing on their property and forcing the children of the poor to be sold into slavery. Nehemiah demanded that the rich nobles who did this to their fellow countrymen must return the property they confiscated and the interest they charged them. Nehemiah set himself as an example by not charging interest to the loans he made, by sharing with many at his table on a daily basis, and by not demanding from the people the food that was allotted to the governor. *Where in the Old Testament does it say that Jews are not to exact interest on their fellow Jews when they give loans to them? What other verses in the Bible say that we are to give to the poor when they are in need?*

**Nehemiah 6** — Seeing that the work on the walls and the gates is nearly completed, Sanballat and Tobiah realize that the only way to stop the work is to intimidate and discredit Nehemiah. Three different times they do their best to cause Nehemiah to be fearful and cave in to their pressure, but he stands resolute each time and prays to God for strength. In the end, the wall and gates are completed in just 52 days, and now the surrounding nations are intimidated and lose their confidence, recognizing that God has accomplished the work through them. *What were the methods Sanballat and Tobiah used against Nehemiah in this chapter, and in what ways did he respond to their various acts of intimidation? See vv. 2-4, 5-9, and 10-14*

**Nehemiah 7** — Now that the walls were rebuilt, the repopulating of the city of Jerusalem was of utter importance. Nehemiah prioritized the security of the people by appointing his brother Hanani to be in charge of choosing gatekeepers to guard the doors of the city. Verses 6 to 73 give a nearly identical genealogy that was given in Ezra 2, so that all those who lived and worked in Jerusalem could prove their ancestry. “Genealogies were lifelines that linked the Jews to the heritage of the past and to their hope for the future. Not being able to prove their ancestry meant second-class citizenship and separation from all that God had given to Israel (Romans 9:4-5).” #8 p. 777. *What were the two godly traits that qualified Hanani to be put in charge of Jerusalem? Why are these qualities important?*

**Nehemiah 8** — Now that the walls were rebuilt, the rest of the book deals with the spiritual rebuilding and reformation of the Jews through the reading and clear explanation of the Law of Moses. From daybreak until midday, Ezra stood on a specially built platform and read the Law while he was flanked by the Levites who gave a clear understanding of what was read. As the Word of God was read, the people were weeping. They were encouraged not to mourn but to rejoice and celebrate. As they were reading, they understood about the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles) that was to be observed in the seventh month.

They gathered branches from the trees available and lived in booths and celebrated the festival, as it hadn't been commemorated since the days of Joshua more than 900 years earlier. *The people of Judah in this passage had a great thirst for God's Word and wept and mourned as it impacted their minds and hearts. Hebrews 4:12 says, "The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword (NKJV)..." Describe a time in your life in which you were greatly impacted by the Word of God as you heard it read and taught.*

**Nehemiah 9** — Just two days after the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles), the Israelites gathered in Jerusalem for a time of fasting, sorrow, and repentance. The first three hours they listened to the Word of God, and the next three hours they had a time of confession and worship of Yahweh. They spent an extended time of worship, speaking of the greatness of God and related His faithfulness to Abraham and all his descendants. They spoke of how stiff-necked and arrogant the Israelites have been throughout their history, even though God had been merciful and continued to intervene on their behalf when they cried out to Him and repented of their sins. The time of repentance ended when they all made a binding covenant to obey the Law of Moses and follow His precepts. *After reading verses 6 to 37, what do these verses say about God's attributes, characteristics, and person.*

Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups, c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV, c. 1997 Thomas Nelson, Inc. 3. Life Application Bible HCSB, c. 1988 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 4. The Complete Bible Companion, c. 2014 Barbour Publishing, Inc., Uhrichsville, OH. 5. ESV Study Bible, c. 2008 Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL. 6. The World Bible Handbook, Lawrence Richards, Word Inc., Waco, TX. 7. The Quest Study Bible NIV, c. 1994 Zondervan Publishing & Christianity Today, Grand Rapids, MI & Wheaton, IL. 8. The Transformation Study Bible, c. 2009 David C. Cook. 9. Halley's Bible Handbook, c. 2000 Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. 10. 500 Answers from the Bible, c. 2006 Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Understanding the Bible, c. 2000 Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Homan Bible Handbook, c. 1992 Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 13. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014 Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL.

## Psalm 118, Nehemiah 10-13, I Timothy 1-2 (#91) Revised 2024

**Psalm 118** — This is a Messianic psalm celebrating God's salvation. *Find the verses in this Psalm which are cited in the New Testament (hint: There are 3 verses cited in the New Testament. Use your study bible cross-reference and footnote).*

**Nehemiah 10** — The time of prayer, confession, and repentance of chapter 9 leads God's people to sign a binding covenant to return to Yahweh in full obedience. Nehemiah, the leaders, the Levites, and the priests make personal commitments to recognize the authority of God's law and give full allegiance to its precepts. Six vows or binding agreements are given in verses 31 to 38, which show how far they strayed from the Law of Moses. Considering the Persian taxation and poverty of many, these commitments were bold and showed their great faith by trusting in the Lord's provision. *What were the six binding agreements that the people of Judah and Benjamin made with each other? See vv. 30, 31a, 31b, 32-33, 34, and 35-38.*

**Nehemiah 11** — Now that the walls have been completed, it was important for the city of David to be fully occupied. Because the morale of the people increased and the city was more appealing, many volunteered to live in Jerusalem with the leaders of Judah and Benjamin, including the priests, Levites, and gatekeepers. A tenth of the population of Judah was chosen by lot and moved into Jerusalem for its added strength and security. *Nehemiah and the leaders had to choose by lot 10% of population of Judah to move to Jerusalem. Why would the Jews be reluctant to live in Jerusalem?*

**Nehemiah 12** — The chapter begins with a list of the priests and Levites who served from the time of Zerubbabel (538 B.C.) until the time of Nehemiah (450 B.C.) which shows the continuity of spiritual leadership during a very challenging era (vv. 1-26). The dedication of the walls of Jerusalem represents not only a fully functioning city, but also a fully restored worship which is centered in the temple, including the singers and orchestra leading in praise and worship. On this special day there were two great processions of praise led by Ezra and Nehemiah that went in opposite directions on top of the city walls and convened at the temple. There were many animal sacrifices offered, and the choirs led in joyous thanksgiving and rejoicing. *What was done for the priests, Levites, singers, and gatekeepers so they would be able to minister in their God ordained places of worship? See verses 44-47. Do we as Christians have a similar responsibility? See I Timothy 5:17-18.*

**Nehemiah 13** — Nehemiah returned to Susa after the rebuilding of the walls. About 15 years later he returned to Jerusalem and found that many of the reforms he had initiated had since been stopped. Tobiah had been given a room in the courts of God's house by Eliashib, the high priest, which was the room in which they were to keep the articles for the house of the Lord. Nehemiah expelled Tobiah, threw out all his belongings, and cleansed and prepared the storehouses with provisions for the Levites (vv. 1-14). He also restored the laws regarding the Sabbath, since all kinds of goods were being sold in Jerusalem on the Sabbath, and many of the Jews were working on the Sabbath (vv. 15-22). Finally, the problem of intermarriage with the pagans around them had resurfaced, so Nehemiah chastises those who were guilty of intermarriage to the extent of rebuking, beating, and pulling their hair out. As he does many times in the book, Nehemiah asks God to remember him with favor for his faithful service. *Nehemiah asks "Remember me, my God, with favor (v. 31b HCSB)." Will God remember Nehemiah and all of those who faithfully serve Him? Explain. See Hebrews 6:10 and I Corinthians 2:9,*

**Timothy** — Paul sends a personal letter from Macedonia to his son in the faith, Timothy, who is serving in a leadership capacity in the church of Ephesus about 64 A.D. He encouraged Timothy to lead the church into godliness, to instruct those who taught false doctrine, to establish church order through the proper choice of elders and deacons, and various practical instructions for church life. Timothy was raised in Lystra by a Greek father and a godly Jewish mother and grandmother. He was said to be the first "second generation Christian leader" in the New Testament. He was a companion of Paul on his second and third missionary journeys and was used by Paul as his trouble-shooter to help him in churches that had various problems or needs.

**I Timothy 1** — The first reason for this letter to Timothy was for him to combat false teachings in the church in Ephesus. These false teachers involved the church in endless and irrelevant questions and speculations that got the church off track from its focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ, and its goal of love coming from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith. Although these men set themselves up as great teachers of the law, they only knew how to lead people into the bondage of legalism, which is unable to transform hearts (vv. 1-11). On the other hand, the gospel of grace that liberates is able to take a blasphemer, a persecutor, a chief of sinners and transform him into the Apostle to the Gentiles. The awesome mercy and patience of God had chosen Paul to be an example to those in the future who would believe on Jesus for eternal life. Now Paul encourages Timothy to strongly engage in the battle with a firm grip on his faith and a clear conscience, not like Hymenaeus and Alexander who suffered the shipwreck of their faith (vv. 12-20). *What were the vital elements of living a godly life given by Paul in chapter 1?*

**I Timothy 2** — Paul directs Timothy into the importance of prayer as part of the church's worship. Prayer is to be made for everyone in general and for kings and rulers in particular. We are to pray for their salvation and also that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life (vv. 1-3). Verses 4 to 6 give us basic facts about the gospel. Paul speaks of the behavior of the men and women at their worship services in the assembly. Men are to make sure that when they lift their hands in worship, they are living a pure and holy life without anger or controversy. Women are to be modest, gentle, sensible, and defer to male leadership in the church without usurping the role that God designed for men. *Give four truths of the gospel that Paul states in verses 4 to 6. What other teachings or religious systems do these verses contradict?*

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## Psalm 119:1-48, I Timothy 3-6, Isaiah 1-2 (#92) Revised 2024

**Psalm 119:1-48** — This Psalm is an acrostic whose 22 stanzas of eight verses in each stanza begin with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. *Consider the possible contradiction between verses 4 and 5. What does this teach us about holiness, repentance, and devotion?*

**I Timothy 3** — Because of the false teaching in the church at Ephesus and the need for godly leaders, Paul taught Timothy the proper organization and the qualifications of those who would oversee the church. As the church at Ephesus was growing, it was needful to evaluate and choose new overseers (elders) by determining their spiritual competency and gifting. Paul then lists 15 qualifications that should be used to properly vet the candidates. Then Paul listed nine characteristics of the deacons (servants) but does not include the responsibility of teaching or the overall direction of the church. The deacons were responsible for the various areas of service that needed to be done in the church. The word “wives” could also mean “women” who would serve as deacons (or deaconess) to minister to the various needs of the church (see the deaconess Phoebe in Romans 16:1). Since the local church is the pillar and foundation of the truth, Paul declares that the purpose for this letter was that Timothy will know how people ought to conduct themselves. The chapter ends with an early church hymn that declared the basic truths of Christ’s divinity, humanity, preeminence, and purpose. *List the 15 qualifications for overseer/elder. Of these, what are two or three you in which have made progress during the last year? In which one of these do you need to grow more?*

**I Timothy 4** — This chapter describes obstacles that keep the church from experiencing proper unity and blessing. Paul speaks of the false teachers who forbid marriage and demand abstinence from certain foods. However, in reality, these are gifts of God that will spur us on to thanksgiving for God’s goodness (vv. 1-5). The rest of the chapter gives instructions to Timothy on fulfilling his leadership role and pastoral duties properly. First, Timothy was exhorted to make sure that the believers were instructed in the words of faith and good doctrine. He was to train himself in godliness which has eternal value and to set his hope on the living God (vv. 6-10). Paul was concerned that Timothy would communicate the truth of God’s Word as well as demonstrate that truth through his life. Although Timothy was younger than many, Paul did not want the older believers to look down on him. He was to be an example by his speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity and devote himself to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, and to teaching. *Verse 8 says, “For physical training is of some value, but godliness has*

*value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come (NIV).” Next Level Core Value #4 says, “Our bodies are God’s dwelling place and property so it is important that we honor Him not only with morally pure lives but also through proper nutrition, exercise, and rest.” Do you feel you are properly taking care of your body through appropriate nutrition, exercise, and rest? If not, what can you do to grow in this area? Do you need an accountability partner to help you?*

**I Timothy 5** — Timothy was to treat the believers of the church just as he would members of his family. The church in Ephesus continued the tradition of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-6) by taking care of the widows in their assembly. Paul set up guidelines for those widows that would be supported by the church. No widow would be supported if she had family members who could take care of her since it was an obligation for each family to provide for their own. Verses 9 to 11 give qualifications for the widows that are to be put on the official support list. Younger widows were not to be put on the list but are encouraged to marry because of the various temptations that would come and cause them to renounce their previous vow. The general principle is that the church should not be burdened with the support of all widows but could help those widows that meet the qualifying criteria (1-16). Paul now gives instructions concerning elders, including supporting those who work hard at preaching and teaching. No elder is to be faced with an accusation against them unless it is supported by two or three witnesses. When there is sin involved in the life of an elder, there should be a public rebuking, and the process should be carried out without partiality or favoritism. No elder should be quickly appointed, but first there must be a careful examination of each one since the real spiritual life of a leader may not be immediately obvious (vv. 17-25). *What are some specific ways a church can determine the true material needs of the believers and the elderly in the church, and how should these needs be met? #14, p. 1679*

**I Timothy 6** — This last chapter deals with various matters; the honoring of masters by slaves, the description of sin and ungodliness in the life of a false teacher, the teaching about the uses and abuses of wealth (repeated in verses 17 to 19), a personal challenge to Timothy, and the closing doxology. To honor the Lord’s name and teaching, slaves are to regard their masters with all respect, and especially those who have masters who are believers (vv. 1-2). Timothy was to stay away from false teachers who were proud, disputatious, depraved, bereft of the truth, and who exploit the church for material gain (vv. 3-5). Christians are to find contentment in living Christ-honoring lives and by enjoying the blessings of simplicity through having their basic needs met. A love of money and the desire to be rich leads to



paths of pain, regret, and self-destruction (vv. 6-10). Paul encourages Timothy to pursue holiness and the fruit of the Spirit, to fight the good fight for the faith, and to seize eternal life in its fullness (vv. 11-12). He ends this personal letter with two themes; a crescendo of praise and worship describing our awesome Trinitarian God, and a challenge to the financially rich to be generous with those in need, not to put their hope in unpredictable and fleeting riches, and to invest their wealth in building God's Eternal Kingdom (vv. 13-21). *Read verses 6 to 10 and 17 to 19. What are the temptations and traps of being rich (or wanting to be rich)? What are the obligations for Christians who have wealth? What are the advantages of believers who are not rich?*

**Isaiah** — This truly is an amazing book written by a prophet who mainly served between 740 to 700 BC. The first half has 39 chapters that thunder judgment upon Israel for their idolatry and wickedness. The last 27 chapters are filled with comfort and hope because of the Lord's Servant who suffers and pays for the sins of the transgressors (53:1-12). Like Revelation 21 and 22, the book of Isaiah ends with the announcement of the new heavens and the new earth. Twenty-six times Yahweh is the "Holy One of Israel" who Isaiah sees high and lifted up (6:1-6). He predicted incredible prophecies about the coming Messiah, such as the virgin birth (7:14), the various names and descriptions of the Messiah (9:6-7), the branch and root of Jesse (11:1-16), the coming of the Messiah to rule with Israel on the earth (40:1-31), and His substitutionary death for our sins (53:5-6). Non-biblical sources suggest that the writer of Hebrews was talking about Isaiah's martyrdom when it says he was "sawed in two (Hebrews 11:37b)."

**Isaiah 1** — This chapter is a courtroom scene where Judah is on trial for departing from the Holy One of Israel and going after other gods. Although they went through all the rituals, sacrifices, and prayers, their hands were covered with the blood of victims. Isaiah says, "Your rulers are rebels, friends of thieves. They all love graft and chase after bribes. They do not defend the rights of the fatherless, and the widow's case never comes before them (v. 23, HCSB)." If they continue in their sin and wickedness, God will send judgment and Israel will be devoured by the sword. If they come back to their God, repent, and return to their Covenant commitment, then Yahweh will restore them, and they will be called the Righteous City, a Faithful City (v. 26). *Read verses 11 to 19. What was wrong with Judah's worship, and what needed to be done to correct it?*

**Isaiah 2** — Isaiah looks forward into the future and sees the mountain of the house of the Lord established in Jerusalem with all the nations of the world coming to worship and learn the ways of the Lord. The Lord will settle disputes during this age of peace and nations will not learn war anymore (vv. 1-5). Returning to the present time, Isaiah denounces Judah for their idolatry, sorcery, alliance with foreigners, gross materialism, and trust in horses and chariots. He warns them of the imminent judgment of the terror of the Lord in which all human pride will be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted on that day. The people are urged to stop trusting in mortals because they really only need to fear the Lord (vv. 6-22). *Identify the future time Isaiah is prophesying about in verses 1-4, and give a chapter in the book of Revelation that also speaks of this coming future kingdom.*

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