

Psalm 128-129, II Peter 1-3, Titus 1-3 (#100) Revised 2024

Psalm 128 — In this psalm blessings are promised to those who fear the Lord. *What does the Bible mean when it tells us to fear the Lord?*

Psalm 129 — This is a psalm that pronounces a curse upon those who hate Jerusalem. *Consider the ill will toward the wicked, that God would drive them back in disgrace, and that they would wither before they grow up. Is this psalm too harsh toward Israel's enemies?*

II Peter — Peter's first epistle speaks of the enemy that is outside the church persecuting believers, but this second epistle tells of the false teachers that are within the church who distort the true message of the gospel as well as other apostolic teachings. Peter wrote this book about 67 A.D. from Rome to the churches scattered around Asia Minor just before his martyrdom at the hands of the emperor Nero. The purpose of II Peter is to encourage believers to grow in their Christian character and holiness, to prepare them with the truth and warn them about false teachers, and for them to live in the reality of the coming of Christ and the Day of Judgment.

II Peter 1 — After coming to know God, we now have the power to live a godly life. Through His very great and precious promises, we are able to share in His divine nature and escape the world that is corrupted by sinful lusts. Now we can grow in eight character qualities that will allow us to live useful and fruitful lives and will deepen our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we follow through on the development of these graces, we show evidence that we are truly God's called children, and some day will make a grand entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (vv. 1-11). The believers have known and been taught the truth, but Peter wants them to remember these words even after his death (vv. 12-15). Peter was not making up a story but actually was an eyewitness of the majesty and power of Christ on the holy mountain when the Father honored His Son. The Holy Scriptures have not come from human initiative, but "men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (v. 21 HCSB)." *1. Amplify the meaning of each of the eight character qualities of verses 5 to 7. Of these eight, which is one that you need to grow in? 2. What do we mean when we say that scriptures are inspired by God? See verses 20 to 21.*

II Peter 2 — Don't be surprised when false teachers secretly come in with destructive heresies just like the false prophets of Israel did before them. Their lives will be filled with immorality, greed, and deception, but you can be sure that God will condemn them to destruction. For examples of God's judgment, look at the fallen angels, the ancient world before the flood, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. On the other hand, God saved Noah, his family, and Lot because "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials (v. 9 ESV)." These bold arrogant people blaspheme supernatural beings. These men are irrational animals and immoral. They delight in deceptions at the love feasts and are greedy just like Balaam, who was rebuked by a donkey. Through their boastful empty words, they draw others into their own evil ways by promising them freedom, but in reality, they become slaves to sin and evil. They escaped the world's corruption by a superficial commitment to Christ but then returned to the old life and are now worse off than before, since they knew the way of righteousness and have turned back to their sin. *After reading this chapter, describe these false teachers' lifestyle, teaching, and how God will judge them.*

II Peter 3 — Peter warns the believers that scoffers will come in these last days, saying that from the beginning all things continue as they always have, and that the physical universe is a natural phenomenon with no evidence of the existence of a God who will judge humankind for their sins. #6 p.789 These scoffers are willingly ignorant that God judged the world one time with the flood. God's Word called for the total destruction of the human race by water (except for Noah and his family) and will someday judge the world and destroy it by fire (vv. 1-7). The Lord is on a different time-table than we are and has not yet come to judge the world because of His desire that no one perish, but that all come to repentance. Someday, however, God's judgment will come unexpectedly, and the "heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with a fervent heat (v. 12b NKJV)." The Lord will create the new heavens and a new earth. This future event should be an incentive for us to be holy in our conduct (vv. 8-14). "The Lord's patience gives time for people to get saved (v. 15a NLT)." Peter says that Paul's writings are inspired like the rest of the scriptures. He closes his book by urging the believers to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (15-18). *Why does Christ delay His coming? See verses 9 and 15a.*

Titus — Titus was counterpart of Timothy and was used by Paul as a troubleshooter in his church planting ministry. This book, written about 64 A.D. to Titus while he was on the island of Crete forming new churches, is very similar to I Timothy in that Paul gives the qualifications of the leaders so that Titus would choose the elders wisely. He is also given the task of confronting false teachers (1:10-16). Paul had just gone to Crete with Titus to start the house churches, but now it was the job of Titus to help these churches grow and mature. Major themes in this book are; (1) that all believers live lives of integrity, faithfulness, godliness, and righteousness, (2) that salvation is by grace through faith, not by works of righteousness; and (3) that we are not to allow false teachers and divisive people to be a part of the assemblies.

Titus 1 — At the very beginning of the letter Paul clearly states his purpose which is for Titus to build up the believing Cretans in the faith so that their knowledge of the truth would lead them to living a godly life. Just like Timothy, Titus was Paul's true son in the faith and was a valuable colleague in ministry with gifts of leadership, organization, and teaching (vv. 1-4). As in the book of I Timothy (chapter 3), Paul lists the character qualities of the elders he is to appoint. The elders are to be blameless in life and testimony, in marriage and family, and have a clear understanding of biblical truth (vv. 6-8). They should have the ability to communicate this truth in order to encourage believers and refute false teachers (vv. 9-10). In the next six verses Paul gives a scorching assessment of the character and actions of these Cretan leaders and teachers, both Jews and Gentiles. Paul describes these men as rebellious, empty talkers, deceptive, dishonest, greedy, liars, lazy gluttons, detestable, disobedient, disqualified, and with corrupted consciences. *Verse two says, "In hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie, pronounced long ages ago (v.2, NASV)." On what basis can we say that those who have truly put their faith in Christ have eternal life and will never be lost? See Numbers 23:19.*

Titus 2 — Paul stresses the importance of sound teaching that will lead to godliness, making Christians attractive to others who do not know Christ. Paul gave instructions to various groups including: (1) older men (v. 2), (2) older women (v. 3), (3) older women to teach younger women (vv. 4-5), (4) young men (v. 6), (5) Titus (vv. 7-8), and (6) slaves (vv. 9-10). Now the grace of God that brings salvation has been revealed to everyone instructing us to reject evil and worldly pleasures and to live God-honoring lives. He redeemed us for the very purpose of being His own special people full of good works. As a member of Christ's kingdom right now, our eyes are fixed on Christ's glorious coming. His return is the real hope for the believer (vv. 11-15). *In verse one Paul exhorts Titus, "You must say the things that are consistent with sound teaching (HCSB)." How can we recognize sound teaching?*

Titus 3 — Paul is extremely concerned about the testimony of believers to the outside world as it relates to government and non-Christians. He reminds them of the ungodly and evil way they used to live before they were saved. Now because of God’s kindness and mercy their lives have been transformed by the renewal of the Holy Spirit to be heirs of God with the hope of eternal life (vv. 1-7). Three times in this chapter (vv. 1, 8 and 14) Paul insists that brothers and sisters devote themselves to good works in order to be salt and light to the unbelieving world. Not only should their lives exhibit the love of Christ through their good deeds to those in need, but also they must reject anyone who shows himself to be quarrelsome or divisive (vv. 8-15). *Three times Paul emphasizes the need for believers to show a transformed life to the non-believing world. What are actual things we can do as Christians to demonstrate Christlike qualities to nonbelievers?*

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 130-131, Philemon, Isaiah 40-44 (#101) Revised 2024

Psalm 130 — A repentant heart waits expectantly for God's mercy and forgiveness. *Why is the psalmist so confident that God will hear and answer his prayer?*

Psalm 131 — The psalmist extols the virtues of humility and the state of being at peace with oneself. *How does a person gain these virtues? See verse 3.*

Philemon — This personal letter was written by the Apostle Paul to Philemon in about 60 A.D., while he was in house arrest awaiting trial before Caesar in Rome. Philemon was a wealthy Christian businessman in Colossae who hosted a church in his home. His slave Onesimus ran away to Rome where he came into contact with the apostle Paul and was soundly converted to Christ. Paul then sent Onesimus back to Philemon in Colossae with this letter asking him to forgive Onesimus and also be willing to call him his brother in Christ. Paul also personally guaranteed payment for anything he might have stolen or wrongs he committed. *After reading this chapter, what are the steps that Paul took in order to appeal to Philemon and rebuild his trust in his runaway slave Onesimus?*

Isaiah 40 — This amazing chapter speaks of God's future plan for Israel and the revelation of Christ's kingdom on the earth. Humankind and its rulers are seen as temporary at best and very quickly a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff. On the other hand, the character and attributes of our awesome God are on display like almost no other chapter in the Bible. Yahweh is seen as the all-powerful creator, the sovereign ruler, the tender shepherd, the wise counselor, and the everlasting God. The nations of the world who ignore the almighty creator are like a drop in the bucket, worthless, and less than nothing. The unsearchable God is able to give power to those who hope, trust, and wait on Him. *List the characteristics and attributes of God given in this chapter.*

Isaiah 41 — The everlasting Yahweh alone is sovereign over history, and calls King Cyrus of Media-Persia to subdue the nations, and guides the events of each new generation from the beginning of history to the very end, for His glory and purposes (vv. 1-7). The Lord assures Israel that she is His chosen servant to whom He promises His presence, protection, and strength (vv. 8-10). The Lord will subdue all their enemies, and they need not fear since their redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. Israel will rejoice in Yahweh because He will cause them to pulverize their enemies and will make the desert overflow with bountiful streams and rivers, resulting in a worldwide declaration of God's power and sovereignty (vv. 11-20). The Lord is not like dumb idols but can tell future events as though it were history. As clear evidence of His omniscience, the Lord predicts the coming of Cyrus which is still more than 150 years into the future. No idol can predict the future or even give an answer but are empty as the wind (vv. 21-29). *What promises does God give to Israel in this chapter? Can we claim Isaiah 41:10 as a promise from God to our own lives?*

Isaiah 42 — This chapter gives the first of four Servant Songs which refer to the Messiah, Jesus (also 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). The passage in 42:1-4 is cited in Matthew 12:17-21. The Lord's Servant will be endued by the Holy Spirit and will bring justice to all the nations. In doing this, He will not be loud or raise His voice and will not quit until His mission is accomplished. The Servant Messiah will be a sign of God's covenant with His people, and He will be a light to guide the nations in order to open their eyes and free the captives from prison (vv. 1-9). Now all of the inhabitants of the earth, whether they live on the islands of the sea, the desert, or on the mountains and hills, will give glory to the Lord, for He will no longer be silent but will rise up like a mighty warrior and lay waste the islands, mountains, and rivers (vv. 10-17). Israel, the unfaithful servant of Yahweh, received His severe judgments for their great sins and disobedience, yet they still did not understand, wake up, or take His discipline to heart (vv. 18-25). *Israel received God's judgments and discipline and was completely decimated but still did not understand and take to heart what God was trying to say to them. Is there any area in your life or the life of someone you know that God has repeatedly been trying to get your (their) attention but you (they) are unwilling to obey and respond to Him? Explain. What steps are needed to be taken to respond to God?*

Isaiah 43 — Now God gives His assurance to Israel’s believing remnant of His love, presence, and redemption after they pass through seventy years of deep waters and fires of persecution. Yahweh has called Israel to be His witness to the world of His power to choose, call, gather, and return them back in the land He has promised to them (vv. 1-13). Now God will do something new when He sends the Medes and the Persians against Babylon so that Israel can return into their land and be what God intended them to be. Yahweh has made Israel for Himself, and someday she will honor the Lord before the whole world during the Millennial Kingdom (vv. 14-21). Isaiah returns to the present time of his writing and sees that Judah is tired of God and is unfaithful in bringing sacrifices to Him. Although Judah has burdened Yahweh with its sins, He promises to blot them out for His own sake in the far future, but still in the near future they must suffer under His judgment in Babylon (vv. 22-28). *What do you think is the meaning of “I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you (ESV)” in verse 4b?*

Isaiah 44 — The Lord chose and formed Jacob (the deceiver) from birth and now calls this nation “Jeshurun” (the upright one) with a promise to help them, prosper them, and pour out His Spirit on them (vv. 1-5). The Lord gives His strongest indictment ever against those who make and worship idols. They exchange the Almighty Creator of the universe for a piece of wood that is used to make fires, cook food and warm themselves. With the same piece of wood, they carve and shape an idol and bow down in front of it saying, “You are my god, rescue me!” “Such stupidity and ignorance! Their eyes are closed, and they cannot see. Their minds are shut, and they cannot think. The person who made the idol never stops to reflect, ‘Why, it is just a block of wood (vv. 18-19 NLT)!’” Yahweh, in patience and love, forgives and redeems His chosen nation and promises to restore the ruins of Israel. About 150 years before it happened, the Lord chose Cyrus, the King of Persia, to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and return the nation of Israel to their homeland (v. 28). *What counterfeit gods do people trust and worship today to give them protection, happiness, and fulfillment? Why is it just as foolish today to trust these rather than the true God? #6 p. 303.*

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Psalm 132, Isaiah 45-50 (#102) Revised 2024

Psalm 132 — This is a psalm remembering David's zeal for the house of God. *What are you zealous for, or to put in another way, what causes you to weep, or what rightfully angers you?*

Isaiah 45 — Through the inspiration of the Lord, Isaiah writes a letter more than 150 years before it is delivered to King Cyrus of Media-Persia, so that he would recognize that he is anointed by the Lord and that all of the success he is having in subduing nations has happened so that he will rebuild the city of Jerusalem and set the Jewish exiles free to return to their own land. The Lord called Cyrus by name, although he did not know God, so that He could demonstrate to him and the whole world that He is the only God, the Creator of earth and mankind (vv. 1-13). It seems that in the rest of the chapter, the Lord looks forward to the millennial reign of Christ on the earth when the nations of the world will come and bow down to Yahweh, the God of Israel, and recognize His superiority and absolute sovereignty. The God and Creator will not only give eternal salvation to Israel, but the whole world will be invited to look to Him in faith and be saved. Someday every knee will bow down and swear allegiance to Yahweh declaring that the "the Lord is the source of all my righteousness and strength (vv. 14-25 NLT)." *Reading verses 3 to 6, what are the reasons that God gave Cyrus and his army continuous victory?*

Isaiah 46 — Unlike Bel and Nebo, the gods of Babylon, who were heavy burdens for the animals that carry them in the annual parades, the Lord carries and sustains the house of Jacob from their birth until old age. No one can compare to God or make Him their equal because He can declare the end from the beginning, His plans will take place, and He will bring about what He has spoken. *Who is Isaiah speaking of when he said in verse 11, "I call a bird of prey from the east, a man for my purpose from a far country?" Why did he say "bird of prey?"*

Isaiah 47 — Now the prophet says it is payback time for the Virgin Daughter Babylon for all her heartless, cruel, and evil acts she perpetrated on her enemies, especially upon Israel, with whom she showed no mercy. Babylon lived for luxury and security with no thought of anyone else, believing that disaster would never happen to her, but in one day she lost her children and became a widow. She trusted in her own wisdom and cunning, in her sorceries and astrologers, but none of them could save her. *What do we learn about the spiritual beliefs and practices of the Babylonians from verses 9-13? #1 p. 940. Are any of these beliefs practiced today in our sophisticated world?*

Isaiah 48 — Even though the people of Israel say that Yahweh is their God, the fact is that their lives are not built on truth and righteousness. They are a stubborn and stiff-necked people who have been rebels from birth, but God will still rescue them for His own name's sake and will not share His glory with idols or people (vv. 1-11). The Lord, who founded the earth, who spread out the heavens above with His right hand, says that He loves Cyrus, who will accomplish His will against the Chaldeans and will succeed in His mission (vv. 12-16). The Lord longed that in the days of old, Israel would have paid attention to His commands so that they could have experienced peace like a river, righteousness like the waves of the sea, and with countless more descendants that would not have been cut off (vv. 17-19). Now they are to leave Babylon with a shout of joy proclaiming, "The Lord has redeemed His servant, Jacob!" Israel can trust God to take care of them as He did during their 40 years in the wilderness, but those who are wicked will never find this new era of peace (vv. 20-22). *Who are the wicked that Isaiah is talking about in verse 22? What do we really need to do to find peace in our lives?*

Isaiah 49 — Verses 1 to 13 show us the second of the **Servant-songs** of Isaiah and tells of the mission and success of the Messiah. This passage reveals to us that the Messiah is a human being called to be Yahweh's servant who, although at times is discouraged by the difficulty of his calling, will not only restore Israel back to their God but will also be a light and salvation to all the nations. Although despised and rejected by the nations, at the proper time the kings and rulers of the earth will bow down and worship Him. The servant is said to be God's covenant to His people and becomes a new Moses

(Deuteronomy 18:15-17) who mediates the New Covenant to Israel as prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34), and leads the prisoners out of captivity back to the Promised Land (vv. 1-13). Israel laments that the Lord had deserted them but God responds, “Can a mother forget her nursing child?” Yahweh will never abandon her and promises manifold blessings for her future after this time of chastisement. The exiles of Israel will return to the land, and God will miraculously provide and protect them from their wicked enemies so that all the people of the earth will know that the Lord is their Savior and Redeemer (vv. 14-26). *In verses 1 to 7, what does it say about the person, mission, struggles, and success of the Servant of the Lord?*

Isaiah 50 — The Lord states that Israel was taken into bondage to Babylon because of their own transgressions even though Yahweh had the power to deliver them as He did in Egypt long ago (vv. 1-3). Verses 4 to 11 is the third **Servant-song** which speaks of the Servant’s determination to do the Lord’s will in spite of suffering and persecution. He persevered in His obedience to Yahweh in the face of severe opposition by fully trusting in God for complete vindication and thus, in God’s timing, He would put His enemies to shame (vv. 4-11). *What lessons about obedience in doing the will of God in the face of suffering can we learn from the Servant of the Lord in this passage? See verses 4-11, John 5:19, Hebrews 5:8.*

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