

## Psalm 143, Nehemiah 11-13, Hebrews 1-3 (#109)

**Psalm 143**— David prays for mercy, forgiveness, and deliverance from his enemies. *What is the basis for David's request?*

**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, and 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,*

**Hebrews**— This book was written during Nero’s persecution sometime between 67 and 69 A.D. when the Jewish Christians were sorely tempted to leave Christianity and return to Judaism due to their spiritual immaturity and their lack of the knowledge of the scriptures. Both the Apostle Paul and Peter had been martyred by this time, but the city of Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed and the temple was still offering sacrifices. This book clearly states that Jesus Christ is vastly superior to the angels, Moses, Joshua, the Hebrew high priests, the sacrifices, and the covenant. Now that Christ, the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, is here, the Jewish sacrificial system established by God through Moses at Mount Sinai is obsolete. The author calls for the recipients “to be imitators of those who through faith and endurance inherit the promises (6:12).” The MacArthur Study Bible, the Life Application Bible, and others suggest that although the writer of Hebrews is unknown, it is possible that it was written by one of the following: Barnabas, Apollos, Luke, Silas, Clement of Rome, Philip, or Priscilla and Aquila.

**Hebrews 1**— Hearing of the great temptation for the Jews to return to Judaism, the author declares the superiority of Jesus over angels by quoting several verses from the Old Testament declaring Jesus to be God, the changeless creator, who is sitting at the right hand of the Father. The writer says about Jesus, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power (v. 3a ESV).” *1. How is Jesus superior to angels? 2. What work has God given angels to do? See verse 14, Acts 10:3-5, Psalm 34:7, I Kings 19:5-7, Acts 12:23, and Revelation 5:11-12.*

**Hebrews 2**— Now the writer hits on a major theme of this book which is for Hebrew believers to persevere and to pay close attention to the word given about Christ and not to drift away from it. God’s people are in great danger when they neglect their great salvation which was confirmed by Jesus with powerful signs, wonders, and miracles. The dominion of the world to come will be under the authority of man not angels because Christ became a man and tasted death for humankind. Jesus is the very center of everything since through His sufferings He saves us, frees us from the slavery of the fear of death, and gives us victory over the power of the Devil. Because of His suffering as a human being, he has become a merciful and faithful high priest and is able to help us. *How can a Christian drift away from the great salvation he or she has in Christ?*

**Hebrews 3**— This chapter presents Christ as superior to Moses since the builder of the house is greater than the house itself. Just as Christ was faithful as the Son over God’s house, and Moses was faithful as a servant in God’s house, so we are to faithfully hold on with courage to the hope we have in Christ and not to test God as the children of Israel did for 40 years in the wilderness. We must never be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness but hold firmly to our confidence in Christ so that through faith we will enter God’s rest and receive the inheritance He has for us. *What does it mean for a Christian to enter God’s rest?*

*Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups, c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV, 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. Key Ideas Bible Handbook, Ron Rhodes, c. 2016, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR. 10. 500 Questions & Answers from the Bible, c. 2006, Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Homan Bible Handbook, c.1992, Homan Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL. 13. Life Essentials Study Bible, c. 2011, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 14. The Message, c. 2002, Eugene Peterson, NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, CO. 15. NIV Study Bible, c. 2011, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI. 16. Understanding the Bible, c.2000, Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN.*

## Psalm 144, Hebrews 4-9 (#110)

**Psalm 144**— David thanks God for preparation, protection in battle, and the prosperity of God's people. *Are you ready to do battle in the arena where God has called you? Explain.*

**Hebrews 4**— Just like the children of Israel in the wilderness, the believing Jews were tempted to leave the rest that they had found in Christ and return to Judaism. The key to enter God's rest is complete faith in the salvation that is found only in the finished work of Christ on the cross and not in our own efforts. So the promise of entering God's rest was not just for Joshua's day but is also for us "today." Just as God rested the seventh day from His work of creation, so too we can rest in God in order to receive His eternal promise and not drop out because of disobedience (vv. 1-11). God's Word is powerful like a double-edged sword or a surgeon's scalpel which is able to cut through everything in order to expose our unbelief, our thoughts, and our motives (v. 12 The Message). Nothing and no one can hide from God, but everyone will be held accountable and fully exposed to His all-seeing eye (v. 13). Since we have a great and superior High Priest in heaven interceding for us, we must come boldly to Him to find mercy and grace when we need it (vv. 14-16). *What important lessons are taught to us in verses 13 and 16? Amplify.*

**Hebrews 5**— The author continues to speak of the superiority of Christ over the descendants of Aaron. Just like Aaron, Jesus also was appointed and chosen by God. Being man He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. Unlike Aaron, Christ never sinned so He never had to make an offering for Himself. During His earthly life, Christ became an effective high priest through learning obedience by what He had suffered. From all that He patiently endured through loving submission to the Father's will, He arrived at full maturity and perfect obedience and became a source of eternal salvation of those who obey Him. Being declared by God a high priest after the line of Melchizedek, His priestly order was superior to that of line of Aaron. The reason for the doubts about Christ's superiority to old Judaism is that these Jewish believers had not progressed in their spiritual journey but were still feeding on the milk of basic scriptural principles instead of eating the solid spiritual food of a maturing believer. *Why do you think these Jewish believers were still immature? How can this apply to the lives of Christians today?*

**Hebrews 6**— The writer urges the believers to stop going back to the basics over and over again, but to build upon these elementary foundational truths, and to grow in spiritual maturity through a deeper knowledge of God’s Word (vv. 1-3). Verses 4 to 9 have been interpreted in various ways, but the passage seems to be hypothetical showing that a true believing Jew cannot lose his or her salvation and will not return to Judaism. Verses 9-10 indicate that the recipients are true believers and that their lives reflect evidences that accompany salvation (vv. 4-10). These believers had come a long way but continued faith and perseverance, not laziness, was needed to realize their hope, and for them to inherit God’s promises (vv. 11-12). God not only promises us the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ, but He confirms it with an oath. This hope we have is like an anchor of a boat and makes our lives safe and secure through the storms of life since Jesus is continually interceding for us before the Father (vv. 13-20). *Write out five verses from the Bible which are anchors to your soul when the storms of life come upon you.*

**Hebrews 7**— This chapter quotes the passage in Genesis where King Melchizedek appears to Abraham. It shows that Jesus is superior to Aaron the high priest because the priesthood of Jesus was after the order of Melchizedek. Aaron gave tithes to Melchizedek in that when tithes were given by Abraham, Aaron was in Abraham’s body. The one who receives tithes is greater than the one who gives them (vv. 1-10). Since the priesthood of Aaron was not able to make people perfect, another priesthood was needed. David prophesied that the Messiah would come in the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4). The rest of the chapter gives various reasons why the priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron. *List the ways that the priesthood of Christ is superior to the priesthood of Aaron. See verses 16-17, 23-25, and 26-28.*

**Hebrews 8**— Now the author speaks of a superior covenant that is administered in a superior place by a superior high priest with superior promises. The earthly sanctuary and tabernacle were just copies and shadows, but their reality is found in the heavenly sanctuary in the very presence of God. Since the first covenant was not faultless because of an inadequate priesthood and sacrifices, and since it produced only temporary results, the Lord promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34 a New Covenant which gives us completeness and permanency. *Give three advantages that the New Covenant has over the Old Covenant. See verses 10-12.*

**Hebrews 9**— This chapter begins with a description of the contents of the tabernacle that were located in the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The high priest would enter the Most Holy Place just once a year to sprinkle the blood on the Mercy Seat, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people of Israel, with the result being a temporary cleansing. Christ, however, entered the Most Holy Place in Heaven once for all with His own blood in order to obtain eternal redemption. The old sacrificial system offered temporary ceremonial purity, but the blood of the Messiah cleanses our consciences from guilt and frees us to serve the living God (vv. 1-15). Just as a will only takes effect upon the death of the one who made it, the death of Christ caused the New Covenant to become operative and in consequence makes us heirs of a heavenly kingdom which shall never pass away. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness, and without the shedding of Christ's blood there is no complete removal of sin. Now that the sins of those who trust Christ are forever put away through His one sacrifice, the purpose of His second coming is not to deal with the sin problem but to bring us eternal salvation. *What two false teachings does verse 27 refute?*

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## Psalm 145, Hebrews 10-13, Esther 1-2 (#111)

**Psalm 145**— This is an acrostic psalm that celebrates God’s sovereignty, unfailing love, and intimate attention to the needs of every living being in His creation. *Meditate on what God has done, who He is, and our proper response (hint: look for “your”, “the Lord”, and “I will”).*

**Hebrews 10**— The annual sacrifices by the High Priest in the old covenant were a constant reminder of our sin and guilt showing that the worshipers could never become perfect or lose their consciousness of sin. God’s delight was not in animal sacrifices but in the voluntary sacrifice of His Son Jesus who came to do the Father’s will and give His body as an offering to take away all sin once and for all (vv. 1-10). The high priests never finished their work since sins were never fully atoned for, but Jesus offered one sacrifice and then sat down at the right hand of the Father showing that full the payment of all sin was made. By His one offering we are perfected forever so that God no longer remembers our sins (11-18). Now we don’t have to rely on a high priest to bring us into fellowship with God since we can enter with great boldness through the blood of Jesus. So that we can hold on to our confession of hope without wavering, we need to encourage one another do good works and to regularly be a part of the local assembly of believers (vv. 19-25). To return to Judaism is unthinkable since it would mean to trample on the Son of God, count His precious blood as worthless, and insult the Holy Spirit who drew them to Himself. The result would be that there would be no payment for their sins, and they would have to suffer the wrath of the living God. Now they need to endure suffering, live by faith, and patiently wait to receive the promised reward (vv. 26-39). *Considering verses 24-25, why is it important to be an active member of a local church? What are its benefits?*

**Hebrews 11**— We now enter God’s Old Testament Hall of Fame as we see men and women who lived by faith without ever receiving the complete fulfillment of the promises God had given them. The recipients of this letter were asked to follow the examples of these great heroes of the faith. Abel, Enoch, and Noah were the pre-flood saints who gave us an example of faith and obedience during a time when the world mocked and ridiculed them. By faith Abraham and Sarah left Ur and Haran to a land that God would show them and had Isaac when their bodies were as good as dead. By faith Moses left all the sinful enticements of Egypt and chose to suffer with God’s people because he saw Him who is invisible. The author continues giving a long list of faith’s warriors with many of them triumphing in this life in miraculous ways while others were persecuted and even martyred. This great gallery of men and women of faith had not yet received the promise of the better covenant which is found in the salvation that the Messiah offers. *Describe from this chapter what faith is and what it does.*

**Hebrews 12**— After receiving encouragement from the cloud of witnesses of chapter 11, the Hebrew believers are inspired to run the race with perseverance by looking to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ who endured the cross and suffered hostility from sinners (vv. 1-3). Now the writer shares the purpose of suffering in the life of the

Christian. Because of God's love for us as His children, He disciplines us in order that we might share in His holiness, righteousness, and peace (vv. 4-13). When trials and temptations come, instead of receiving God's grace during these trying times, we can allow a root of bitterness spring up in us, and many will be defiled. Esau's immoral and irreverent lifestyle caused him to sell his spiritual inheritance for a single meal (vv. 14-17). Now the choice is clear for the Jewish Christians. Do they want to return to the Law, Moses, and the fearful presence of God at Mount Sinai and be eternally separated from God for their sin, or be lifted through Christ's merits to the heavenly realm, Mount Zion, a kingdom that can never be shaken? We must worship God "with holy fear and awe. For our God is a devouring fire (vv. 28b-29 NLT)." *What should be our response to God's discipline in our lives? See verses 5 to 13.*

**Hebrews 13**— In this last chapter of the book of Hebrews, the author gives instructions on how to live out their faith in very practical ways. The epistle gives tender appeals to let brotherly love continue, to show hospitality, to give empathy for those in prison, to honor the marriage vows, to be content with the material things we possess, and to trust in God's protection (vv. 1-6). The lives and the faith of the elders of the churches should be followed, respected, and imitated. Just like Jesus suffered outside the gate of Jerusalem, these Jewish believers need also to bear the disgrace that they have experienced from being excluded from the Jewish community. There is no longer a need of animal sacrifices because of the cross, but we are to continually offer sacrifices of praise by acknowledging allegiance to His name. After asking for prayer, the writer gives a glorious benediction and closes with the desire to be with these fellow believers soon. *What does the author say about: prisoners (v. 3), marriage (v. 4), Jesus Christ (vv. 8, 12, 20-21), strange teachings (v. 9), and what our response should be to the leaders of the church (vv. 17).*

**Esther**— "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this (4:14b NKJV)." This is the key verse of this most exciting book which demonstrates boldly the providence and sovereignty of God and His tender care for His chosen people, but never once mentions the name of God. This book took place from about 483 to 473 B.C. in the Persian city of Susa where King Xerxes (Ahasuerus in Hebrew) had a royal winter palace. The events happened about 30 years before the story of Nehemiah. Esther and Mordecai are the key people in this true-life drama which clearly displays their courage and strength. As a person reads the twists and turns of the book of Esther they must cry out, "only God."

**Esther 1**— In the first scene of this reality drama, during the third year of King Xerxes, the king welcomes his officials, staff, nobles, and also the officials from the twenty provinces of the Media-Persia Empire to a celebration lasting 180 days that will display the greatness of his magnificent splendor. The six months of festivities ended with



a week-long banquet when all of the people of the province were invited to come and enjoy an open bar (wine) with unlimited drinking. On the last day of the feast an inebriated King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to appear in order to display her beauty to all the men, but she refused the king's command. The king conferred with his royal advisors after being rebuffed by the queen. The consensus of his wise counselors was that she must be removed as queen, or it would give incentive for women of the kingdom not to obey their husbands. The bigger picture seems to be that if a king cannot control his wife how can he control his vast kingdom? *Was Queen Vashti right in refusing the king's command? What did King Xerxes do wrong?*

**Esther 2**— The second scene describes an all-out effort to find a queen in place of the deposed Vashti. Beautiful young women are taken from all of the twenty provinces of the kingdom and brought to Susa to be a part of the king's harem and to prepare themselves for a night with the king so that he could decide which one would become queen. Now Mordecai, a Jewish man who was a Benjaminite, was the legal guardian of his cousin Hadassah (that is, Esther). Esther was also taken into the King's harem because of her great beauty and had won the favor of Hegai who was in charge of the harem. After being taken to the king, Esther won the favor, love, and approval of King Xerxes more than any of the other young women, and so she became the queen. During this period Esther obeyed Mordecai's orders and never revealed her ethnicity as Jewish. In an important subplot, Mordecai finds out that two men who guarded the king's entrance conspired to assassinate the king. Mordecai reveals to Esther the scheme, and she alerts the king who after an investigation to verify the treason has the two men hanged on the gallows. *Where do we see the providence of God in the first two chapters of Esther?*

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## Psalm 146, Esther 3-10 (#112)

**Psalm 146**— This psalm is a call to praise our all-sufficient eternal God who sustains us and thwarts the plans of evil men. *Give five ways that God helps those who rely on Him.*

**Esther 3**— In the third scene the real-life villain Haman, the Agagite, becomes more and more powerful and is second only to the king. Upon the king's decree, all were to bow down and pay homage to Haman when he passed by. Mordecai, the descendent of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, did not bow down to Haman, a descendent of King Agag of the Amalekites. Haman was filled with so much rage when Mordecai would not bow down that he not only wanted to kill Mordecai, but also all the Jews in the twenty provinces of the kingdom. The clueless king agreed to Haman's proposal to kill all of the Jews and sealed it with his signet ring. Couriers quickly took to the provinces of the kingdom the letters announcing the decree that proposed a complete extermination of the Jews on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of Adar, which was about eleven months away. *What does this chapter say about the person and character of (1) Mordecai, (2) Haman, and (3) King Xerxes?*

**Esther 4**— In the fourth scene Mordecai goes into great mourning when he hears about the decree to kill all the Jews in the entire kingdom. Hearing of Mordecai's loud and bitter crying and his wearing of sackcloth and ashes, Esther tries to have him clothed but he refuses. After sending her attendant Hathach to go to him and find out what was happening, Mordecai told him everything and gave him a copy of the written decree to show to Esther and asked her to plead personally to the king for her people. Esther relayed the message to Mordecai that if anyone approaches the king in the inner courtyard without being summoned, they would suffer the death penalty with the exception being that the king extends the gold scepter to that person. Esther had not been summoned to appear before the king for the last 30 days. After warning Esther that her own life was in jeopardy if she didn't act, Mordecai said, "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this (NKJV)?" Esther had Mordecai gather all the Jews in Susa in order to fast for her for three days, and then she would approach the king. "If I perish, I perish," she said. *Obviously Esther had become queen by God to save the Jews from extermination. What vision has God implanted in your heart for His kingdom? Or, if you could serve the Lord in any way, what need is there in Christ's kingdom that you are passionate about fulfilling?*

**Esther 5**— After three days of fasting, Esther dressed in her royal clothing and stood in the inner courtyard. Upon seeing the queen, the king extended the gold scepter toward her. The king was pleased to see Esther and offered to give her whatever she wanted up to half of the kingdom. She requested that the king come to a banquet that very day which she had prepared, and that he bring Haman with him. At the banquet that day the king asked her what her petition was, but Esther requested that the king and Haman come to a second banquet that she will

prepare for them the next day, and then she will ask her petition. When Haman went home that night he was filled with joy and in good spirits because of his good fortune and summoned his friends and wife to join him. Displaying great pride, he boasted of his glorious wealth, his many sons, and the fact that the queen only invited him and the king to the dinner. When he described the great hatred he had for Mordecai, his wife and friends suggested he build a gallows 75 feet high on which to hang him. He had the gallows built that very night with the intention of asking the king for permission to hang Mordecai the next day. *Queen Esther immediately won the favor of the king upon her entrance. What do you think was going through the mind of King Xerxes when she sought and received his approval?*

**Esther 6**— The next scene is in the King's bedroom chamber where he is tossing and turning and not able to sleep. To help him sleep he orders the book that records the daily events of his kingdom to be read to him. When he hears about how Mordecai thwarted an assassination plot against him, he asks what honor Mordecai has received for doing this. His attendants say that he has received no recognition. At that moment Haman was in the court to ask King Xerxes permission to hang Mordecai. When asked by the king what should be done for the man the king wants to honor, Haman could only think that he must be that man the king wanted to honor. Then the king tells Haman to do the exact thing he had suggested and to do it to Mordecai. Mordecai was dressed in royal robes and was led on horseback by Haman. After finishing with Mordecai, Haman hurried home to tell the horrible news to his family. *What great defect do we see in the life of Haman in this chapter? See verses 5-10 and Proverbs 16:18.*

**Esther 7**— The king and Haman come to the second feast prepared by Esther. The king again asks Esther what her petition is, and she requests the king to spare her life and the lives of her people since Haman had sold them out to destruction, death, and extermination. Upon hearing this, the king was angered and went to the palace garden. When the king returned he found Haman falling on the couch where Esther was reclining, he became exceedingly angry and ordered Haman to be hanged on the gallows that had been built for Mordecai.

**Esther 8**— Queen Esther is rewarded with the estate of Haman, and Mordecai takes Haman's place as second in command to the king. Although the law against the Jews had to stand because it was irrevocable, the king allowed Esther and Mordecai to make another decree to offset the first decree without canceling it. The second decree gave the Jews a right to defend themselves if attacked. Now many of the ethnic groups became Jews because it was dangerous not to be a Jew. *What godly character traits do we see in Esther in chapters 7 and 8, and what rewards did Esther and Mordecai receive for their steadfastness?*

**Esther 9-10** — In the final scene the tables are turned so that when the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month (Adar) arrived, the Jews gained the upper hand against their enemies by attacking those who were determined to destroy them. The Jews had the help of all the other nationalities because the fear of the Jews and Mordecai had fallen on them. The Jews killed 800 of their enemies in two days in Susa including the slaying of the ten sons of Haman, and 75,000 men were killed in the other provinces, but they did not take any plunder. Mordecai and Esther sent out a letter to all the Jews in all the provinces to establish the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> days of Adar as days of celebration of Purim throughout all their generations. Mordecai became the second in command and was loved by all of the Jews because he sought the well-being of all of the Jewish people. *Why didn't the Jews take any plunder from their enemies?*

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## Psalm 147, II Peter 1-3, Hosea 1-5 (#113)

**Psalm 147**— This is a celebratory psalm recounting God’s unique relationship with the nation of Israel.  
*Personalize this psalm and reflect on who God is to you (try replacing them, they, and our with me or my).*

**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 distorting 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 the believers to grow in their Christian character and holiness, to prepare them with the truth in order to 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.*

**Hosea**— This book emphasizes first of all the attribute of God's outrageous love for His people, Israel, even when they had no desire for Him, and secondly, the righteous judgment of God because of the sins of His people. To illustrate God's love, Hosea is told to go and marry a prostitute who is unfaithful like Israel. In the end Hosea rescues his wife Gomer and restores her as his wife just as Yahweh rescues His beloved Israel and restores her from her apostasy. The life of Hosea begins at the end of reign of Jeroboam II during a time of prosperity, materialism, immorality, and injustice in Israel. Although written about 715 B.C. after the captivity of Assyria, the book of Hosea recorded the events of Israel (Northern Kingdom/Ephraim) from 753 B.C. to 715 B.C.

**Hosea 1**— To illustrate God's relationship with Israel (Northern Kingdom), the Lord told Hosea to marry a promiscuous (adulterous) woman by the name of Gomer. Hosea and Gomer had three children that God told Hosea to name Jezreel (I will scatter), Lo-ruhamah (No Compassion), and Lo-ammi (Not My People). These three names were communicating a message from Yahweh to Israel. In the midst of judgment, God promises a future blessing to all of Israel and Judah when, during the millennial reign of the messiah, this restored and united nation will become so numerous that they cannot be counted. The men of Israel will be called "My People," and the women of Israel will be called "Compassion (v. 2:1)."

**Hosea 2**— The children (possibly the common people) are told to rebuke their mother (kings and leaders) for her adultery and idolatry because she led the whole nation into trusting and seeking Baal instead of the Lord. She

lavished silver and gold on Baal but didn't realize it was Yahweh who had given her everything she possessed. Because of her harlotries, the Lord will expose her shame in the sight of all her lovers, will put an end to her celebrations, and will punish her. Then God will speak tenderly to Israel and she will call Him, "My husband" and not "My Baal (master)." Hosea depicts the future millennial kingdom when Israel becomes Yahweh's wife forever (v. 19). He restores the earth so that there will be no more war. He makes a new covenant with Israel so that He says, "You are My people," and Israel responds, "You are My God." *Explain the reason Hosea named his children Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi, and why the last two names were later changed. See also 2:1, 2:23.*

**Hosea 3**— Now Yahweh tells Hosea to go to his adulterous wife, Gomer, buy her back, and reconcile with her. Hosea's love for his unfaithful wife is like the Lord's love for His idolatrous wife, Israel. Just as Hosea and Gomer would refrain from conjugal relations for a period of time, so Israel will live many days without a King or temple sacrifice and will also not be involved in idolatry as before. Afterward, in the last days, Israel will seek after Yahweh and David, their king, and "will tremble in awe of the Lord and his goodness (v. 5 NLT)."

**Hosea 4**— The Lord gives an indictment against Israel by charging them with every type of sin imaginable beginning with cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery. His biggest charge was against their priests. He says about them, "My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge....Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children (v. 6 NAS)." The people have abandoned themselves to promiscuity, drunkenness, gross idolatry, and cult prostitution. "Israel is as obstinate as a stubborn cow (HCSB)" and is married to its idols. *Explain the meaning of 3:4-5, and what period of time it is talking about.*

**Hosea 5**— The priests, house of Israel, and the Royal house will be severely punished for their prostitution, arrogance, and wickedness without any means of remedy. Worse yet, Judah will also follow suit in their sinfulness by moving the ancient boundary markers and thus stealing the property of others. Ephraim thinks she is slick by seeking help from Assyria, but the Lord will tear her to pieces like a lion. The chapter ends with hope. "I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me (v. 15 ESV)." *Going back to chapter 4 verse 6 says, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge (NIV)." How is this verse true in our time, and how has God's Word been marginalized in our society?*

*Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups, c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV, 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. Key Ideas Bible Handbook, Ron Rhodes, c. 2016, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR. 10. 500 Questions & Answers from the Bible, c. 2006, Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Homan Bible Handbook, c.1992, Homan Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL. 13. Life Essentials Study Bible, c. 2011, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 14. The Message, c. 2002, Eugene Peterson, NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, CO. 15. NIV Study Bible, c. 2011, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI. 16. Understanding the Bible, c.2000, Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN.*