

**One Year Bible Blog – Weekly Notes - www.OneYearBibleBlog.com
December 5 - December 12, 2010, [Copyright © 2004-2010 One Year Bible Blog](http://www.OneYearBibleBlog.com)
Weekly Notes will cover our readings from Sundays through Saturdays**

Notes & Group Questions from December 5 - 12 readings (Questions (Q:) for groups are bolded below)

HOSEA 1:1 - AMOS 6:14

12/5 - Allright, today is a big day! We start The Book of the Twelve, or the Minor Prophets. Basically, this means we are in the last 12 books now of the Old Testament, and all of them are pretty short books by various prophets. These 12 prophets were contemporaries of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and their books parallel these three books. These 12 aren't called "minor" prophets in that they were "lesser" than others - but, they are called "minor" because their books are shorter. The first prophet of The Book of the Twelve we start today is Hosea. Hosea prophesied in about 750 B.C. in the northern kingdom of Israel - which was rare. Most of the prophets were in the southern kingdom of Judah. Hosea lived during the final / last days of the northern kingdom, which ended in 722 B.C.

~ Hosea ~

Author: Hosea

Date: Eighth century B.C.

Content: The book of Hosea consists of two unequal parts, the first containing Hosea's life (chapters 1-3) and the second containing Hosea's messages (chapters 4-14). Hosea was a prophet to the northern Kingdom of Israel prior to its fall in 722 B.C., and his ministry spanned some forty years. He was a contemporary of Amos, Isaiah, and Micah. Hosea's unhappy marriage life depicted symbolically the state of affairs in his nation. Just as his wife left home for a life of prostitution, so Israel had left God to seek after false gods. But as Hosea continued to love his wife and finally brought her home again, so God continued to love Israel and promised to restore her someday.

Theme: Two things stand in marked contrast in the book of Hosea: the love of God and the waywardness of Israel. God is depicted as faithful, caring, forgiving, kind, and loving. God's unending love is the theme of the book. Israel is seen as faithless, straying, sinful, rebellious, and wanton. She is characterized by ignorance of what God requires and total lack of desire to please God. However, just as Hosea's love triumphed in the end, so will God's love work a miracle of transformation in Israel. *(Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 15)*

12/5 - Hosea chapter 1 certainly stands out right away - with God commanding Hosea to marry a prostitute, Gomer. The purpose of this relationship is to parallel Israel's unfaithfulness to God. You'll note that the names of the children born to Gomer get progressively worse for the people of Israel - 1. Jezreel, or "God scatters" 2. Lo-ruhamah--'Not loved'- 3. Verse 9 provides the worse name that could be bestowed to symbolize God's relationship with Israel: *"And the LORD said, "Name him Lo-ammi--'Not my people'--for Israel is not my people, and I am not their God."* Ouch.... This is about as bad as it can get for Israel. Fortunately, we see redemption in verse 10: *"Yet the time will come when Israel will prosper and become a great nation. In that day its people will be like the sands of the seashore--too many to count! Then, at the place where they were told, 'You are not my people,' it will be said, 'You are children of the living God.'" Whew! This applies to most of us reading this as well - Gentiles. This is the beginning of the mission to the Gentiles after the time of Jesus. Q: Do you we believe we are part of this promise? That we are parts of the sands of the seashore? That we are children of the living God?*

12/5 - Chapter 2 is a powerful "legal case" against Israel and her unfaithfulness to God. Verse 8 stood out to me in this chapter today: *"She doesn't realize that it was I who gave her everything she has--the grain, the wine, the olive oil. Even the gold and silver she used in worshiping the god Baal were gifts from me!" Q: Do we realize that everything we have comes from God? Everything? Do we misuse any of these gifts from God in our life in ways that would not be pleasing to God? Could God bring a "legal case" or "lawsuit" against us today for misusing his gifts to us?*

12/5 - Chapter 3 brings us redemption again for Israel. Verse 5 I believe applies to us today - we who are in the last days (all the days after the life of Jesus) - *"But afterward the people will return to the LORD their God and to David's descendant, their king. They will come trembling in awe to the LORD, and they will receive his good gifts in the last days."* Q: Have you returned to Jesus? Jesus who is from the line of David? Is Jesus your king? Are you receiving God's good gifts through your awe and faith in God through Jesus?

12/6 - Hosea chapters 4 & 5 are classic prophesying! If you ever think of a prophet in the Old Testament going around and stirring things up in the land - think of these 2 chapters... If you're just checking out this website and today's

readings, I realize that they will sound very harsh on the surface. However, context from Jeremiah & Ezekiel & 2 Kings will help catch you up on why God is not happy here. Essentially the northern kingdom of Israel is worshiping Baal, an idol/false god, and not God himself. And the immorality in the land is skyrocketing. God's reaction here is actually a compassionate reaction - he is trying to reverse the immorality and bring people back to him in repentance. Verses 1 & 2 in chapter 4 set the stage for these 2 chapters: *"Hear the word of the LORD, O people of Israel! The LORD has filed a lawsuit against you, saying: "There is no faithfulness, no kindness, no knowledge of God in your land. You curse and lie and kill and steal and commit adultery. There is violence everywhere, with one murder after another."* **Q: See any violations of the Ten Commandments in these 2 verses?** Verse 18 really stood out to me today: *"Their love for shame is greater than their love for honor."* **Q: Is it possible in our world today that there are people who love shame more than they love honor? It is possible that this happens in our lives at times? Will we pursue love of honor in our lives, leaving behind anything that might look like love of shame?**

12/7 - Today we get 4 chapters of Hosea, with pretty much a continuation of prophesying by God via Hosea on what's going to happen to Israel due to her unfaithfulness and many sins. Hosea chapter 6's first 2 verses start things off on what seem like a hopeful note. However, commentaries suggest that this was a very shallow pledge by Israel: *"Come, let us return to the LORD! He has torn us in pieces; now he will heal us. He has injured us; now he will bandage our wounds. In just a short time, he will restore us so we can live in his presence."* Even if this is a shallow pledge from Israel, I do really like verse 3 too: *"Oh, that we might know the LORD! Let us press on to know him!"* **Q: Are we pressing on in our lives to know God? Are we returning to God? Are we seeking to continually live in His presence?**

12/7 - God's reply to all of this in verse 6 is fantastic: *"I want you to be merciful; I don't want your sacrifices. I want you to know God; that's more important than burnt offerings."* **Q: Are there times in our lives where we try to bring "sacrifices" of prayer or pledges of repentance or works, when really what we should be bringing to God is mercy for others and just simply the desire to know God? Do our "acts" of repentance sometimes get in the way of our actual love relationship with God?**

12/7 - Chapter 7 Verse 16 stood out to me today as well: *"They look everywhere except to heaven, to the Most High."* **Q: If we are hurting, sad, tired, do we look to things other than God? Do we look to "quick fixes" from things of this world that are not healthy for us? Do these "quick fixes" really fix the problem? Are we looking everywhere except to heaven, to the Most High? Will we look only for the Most High - God?**

12/8 - Today we wrap up the book of Hosea! It's been a great read for me this year. It has been a good look at how the prophets of the Old Testament were warning Israel & Judah over and over again of their sins - sins that multiplied as we read in today's readings - and there was no repentance. Things just got worse. **Q: This did make me think today - if we continue to sin and sin and things get worse and worse in our lives and how we are adversely affecting other people's lives around us, is maybe the most compassionate thing for God to do - for us and others - to stop us from our path of destruction?** My thought here in today's readings is that God is a compassionate God. Yes, he's throwing out some tough stuff in what he's saying - and will be doing - but for the end goal of getting people from stopping their sinful ways and harming themselves and others. Today, we are fortunate, compared to the Old Testament days, that we have Jesus Christ as a mediator for our sins between us and God - and not just a mediator - but a Healer. Jesus can heal us from our sinful desires and ways. So, while I do see God as being compassionate in the Old Testament & I am so thankful for his great compassion of sending his son Jesus to the earth for us. Without a doubt, God is good.

12/8 - Hosea chapter 10 verse 12 I loved today: *"Plant the good seeds of righteousness, and you will harvest a crop of my love. Plow up the hard ground of your hearts, for now is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and shower righteousness upon you."* Beautiful verse! **Q: Are you planting good seeds of righteousness in your life? What would good seeds of righteousness be? Is it possible that faith in Jesus is a seed of righteousness that you should plant - and that would indeed harvest a crop of God's love in your life? To plant these seeds of righteousness, you may need to plow up some hard ground in your heart and you may need to seek God like never before. Do you think this plowing is worth it? Will you plow so that God may come into your life and shower righteousness upon you?**

12/8 - In Hosea chapter 11 verses 8 & 9 we read this about God's compassion: *"Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah and Zeboiim? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows. No, I will not punish you as much as my burning anger tells me to. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy."* I absolutely love these

verses. **Q: Do you believe that God will not give up on you? Do you believe that God's heart overflows with compassion for you? Do you believe that God is the one and only Holy and Living God, who is indeed involved in every single moment of your life? Do you believe God is closer than the air you breathe?** (Thanks to the musician David Wilcox for this last question. I love that thought - God is closer than the air we breathe!)

12/8 - The book of Hosea ends with a phenomenal verse - chapter 14 verse 9: *"Let those who are wise understand these things. Let those who are discerning listen carefully. The paths of the LORD are true and right, and righteous people live by walking in them. But sinners stumble and fall along the way."* This verse reminds me of the beauty of studying the Bible! The Bible gives us wisdom - and also we need wisdom to understand the Bible's teaching. But, the beauty is that the more we study the Bible, the more we gain wisdom, and the more that wisdom allows us to truly understand what we're reading in the Bible! It's a never-ending circle of elevation in our study of the Bible - we'll never fully "get it" all this side of heaven. But the more we study the Bible, the more I believe we'll be able to truly understand it and put it into practice. **Q: Do you believe this to be true? Have you found over time that studying the Bible becomes more and more interesting and you gain more and more insights and understandings?** This verse above I think also has a warning if we don't surrender our lives to Jesus, dive into God's Word, and put it into practice in our lives. There is the very real risk of stumbling and falling along the way... Let us not stumble!

12/9 - Today we start and finish the book of Joel! The book is basically about locusts. :) Well, okay, more than that. This book was written by pretty much an unknown author. There are 12 other Joels mentioned in the Old Testament, and none are thought to be this book's author. Joel's name means "The Lord is God" or "Yahweh is God." Not a bad name eh! This name is actually the reverse of Elijah - "God is Lord/Yahweh". Different commentators estimate that this book was probably written between the 8th and 5th centuries B.C.

~ Joel ~

Author: Joel

Date: Ninth century B.C.

Content: This beautifully written book uses a plague of locusts to describe symbolically God's coming judgment on Jerusalem. Just as locusts devour the land, so will the enemy armies devour Jerusalem unless the nation repents of its sins. If the people do respond, there will be a time of prosperity and a return of God's favor. God's favor is seen as going beyond the immediate future to a time when God would pour out his Holy Spirit upon all flesh. The New Testament sees this as being fulfilled at Pentecost.

Theme: Joel's message is one of coming judgment if Jerusalem does not repent. Just as surely as the locusts strip the trees bare, so will God strip bare the land. Joel also speaks of coming prosperity, and final blessing, if the people respond in faith. (Above commentary is from *"The One Year Bible Companion"* pp. 15-16)

12/9 - Joel chapter 2 verse 13 stood out to me in today's readings: *"Don't tear your clothing in your grief; instead, tear your hearts. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you."* I like that - tear your hearts. One of my favorite musicians, David Wilcox, often talks and sings about hearts not working right - until they are broken. I think he's actually preaching the Gospel message with this thinking. When we finally get to the point of surrendering our lives to Jesus, we come with broken-open hearts. Hearts that have been torn. We've given up our pride. We're reading for God to fill our hearts instead. And as this verse tells us - God is gracious and merciful. **Q: Has your heart been torn for God?**

12/9 - Joel chapter 2 verses 28-32 are amazing! *"Then after I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. In those days, I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, men and women alike. I will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth--blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon will turn bloodred before that great and terrible day of the LORD arrives. And anyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved. There will be people on Mount Zion in Jerusalem who escape, just as the LORD has said. These will be among the survivors whom the LORD has called."* I didn't realize until recently that these verses were quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost - seven weeks after Jesus' resurrection - in the book of Acts. Check out the similarities at this link, [Acts Chapter 2 verses 16-21](#). Back to Joel chapter 2 verse 29: *"In those days, I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, men and women alike."* We are in those days... **Q: Has God's Spirit been poured out upon you? Into your heart?**

12/10 - Today we start the book of Amos! Amos was a unique prophet in that he was a shepherd and fig grower. His prophecies come from about 760 to 750 B.C. at a height of Israel & Judah's prosperity - materially. (not spiritually...) Though Amos was from Judah, his messages were primarily directed at Israel. Amos chapter 1 verse 2 sets the stage for

this book and the prophecies to come: *"This is his report of what he saw and heard: "The LORD's voice roars from his Temple on Mount Zion; he thunders from Jerusalem! Suddenly, the lush pastures of the shepherds dry up. All the grass on Mount Carmel withers and dies."* Then in the remainder of chapter 1 and 2 there are prophecies against Israel and Judah's surrounding neighbors all starting with - *"The people of _ (fill in the blank) _ have sinned again and again, and I will not forget it. I will not let them go unpunished any longer!"* **Q: Is it possible that this blank could maybe be filled in on our life or habits at times? Is it possible that this blank could be filled in by nations in our world today? If God were to punish, might it be a holy discipline to bring us back to repentance and right relationship with God?**

12/10 - In chapter 4 verse 2 it stood out to me how Judah was being called to the carpet as well as the neighboring nations: *"They have rejected the laws of the LORD, refusing to obey him. They have been led astray by the same lies that deceived their ancestors."* **Q: Do we obey God today in our lives? Are there areas in our life where we might be deceived - either by others, or maybe even in our own minds?**

12/10 - And Israel is called to the carpet in verses 6 & 7: *"They have perverted justice by selling honest people for silver and poor people for a pair of sandals. They trample helpless people in the dust and deny justice to those who are oppressed."* It seems that God is very interested in the care of the poor back then. Do you think he is still interested in the care of the poor today? Are we caring for the poor & the oppressed in our world today? In your life, are you caring for the poor & oppressed? Consistently? How?

12/11 - Today in Amos chapters 4, 5, & 6 we read about Israel's failure to listen, a call to repentance, and warning of coming Judgment. Chapter 4 verse 13 stood out to me in today's readings: *"For the LORD is the one who shaped the mountains, stirs up the winds, and reveals his every thought. He turns the light of dawn into darkness and treads the mountains under his feet. The LORD God Almighty is his name!"* Here we are reminded that God is the creator of all things, and he still is in control of what happens in the present time. He is the past, present, and future. I like that phrase, "reveals his every thought." Meaning, God wants His ways, His character, His thoughts, His love to be known by all. **Q: Do you believe God reveals His every thought to us? Where might we best find out what God's every thought is? Do you want to know God's thoughts above all else?**

12/11 - I think chapter 5 verse 14 today is a good reminder and warning to each of us: *"Do what is good and run from evil - that you may live! Then the LORD God Almighty will truly be your helper, just as you have claimed he is."* I believe that sometimes we think we can overcome evil through our own sheer will power. Or that we can change evil. This verse reminds us to simply RUN! I like that reminder. Sometimes you just gotta get out of Dodge to avoid evil influencing you or overtaking you. **Q: Are there temptations or bad habits in your life that you have been trying to overcome, battle, change - and perhaps you should just RUN from them? Flee from them? So that you may truly live?**

12/11 - Amos chapter 6 verse 5 stood out to me for some reason today: *"You sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and you fancy yourselves to be great musicians, as King David was."* I guess a couple of things jumped out at me here. **Q: First, the singing idle songs to the sound of the harp made me ask myself, are we sometimes idle with our time? When perhaps God is wanting us to be purposeful or intentional with our time? Don't get me wrong - rest is good. But, is idleness good?** I think rest can be purposeful and intentional and healthy. Or it can potentially be just the opposite. **Next - do we sometimes fancy ourselves to be "great musicians as King David was" - meaning, do we sometimes try to pretend to be someone who we are not? Are we masking over who we really are, and playing fake? Should we instead be real? And sincere? And intentional and purposeful?** I guess I'm just getting at here - **are there times when we are being fake? When, perhaps God is simply calling us to simply be real? To be who we are? Who are you? If you need to, will you take off your mask and just be who God made you to be?**

1 JOHN 5:1 - REVELATION 3:6

12/5 - We finish the book of First John this today! What a great book it has been for me this year. I hope it has been a blessing for you as well. Verses 3 & 4 in 1 John chapter 5 are powerful: *"Loving God means keeping his commandments, and really, that isn't difficult. For every child of God defeats this evil world by trusting Christ to give the victory."* **Q: Do you love God by keeping his commandments? Do you trust Jesus to give you the victory over evil in this world? Does your trust in Jesus make keeping God's commandments not difficult?**

12/5 - Verses 14 & 15 are good reflections on how we should pray - and that we should pray: *"And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for."* **Q: Do you pray confidently, asking God for things**

that are in line with his will? Do you know that God is listening to your prayers? Are you sure that he will give you what you ask for, if it is in line with his will?

12/5 - And verse 21 is a powerful end to this book of 1 John: "*Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.*" **Q: Is there anything in your life that might take the place of God in your heart? Will you turn this idol over to God? Will you keep away from this idol? Will you allow God to take the primary place in your heart and your mind?**

12/6 - Today we read through the very short letter of Second John! This letter, like First John, was written by one of Jesus' 12 disciples, John son of Zebedee - who also wrote the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation. This letter was essentially written to continue to dispel Gnosticism, which was a twisting of Christianity - it basically meant salvation through knowledge (gnosis is Greek for knowledge). Gnostic teachers were traveling throughout the land at the time this letter was written, and this letter warns people to not encourage this false teaching in any way.

~ Second John ~

Author: John the apostle

Place: Uncertain, probably Ephesus

Date: A.D. 85-95

Content: This short letter was written either to a Christian woman whom John knew or to a church personified as a woman. In any case, it was written to encourage true Christian love and to warn against the deceivers who were coming into the world. John charges the believers not to participate in their evil, but to stand for the truth no matter what that cost. Theme: The need for Christians to be alert and diligent when it comes to false doctrine is the theme of this letter. We must be aware that false doctrine exists and we must be ready to deal with it, if confronted. All the while, however, we must live out the love of God in our lives. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 34*)

12/6 - Verses 5 & 6 certainly stand out in this short letter: "*And now I want to urge you, dear lady, that we should love one another. This is not a new commandment, but one we had from the beginning. Love means doing what God has commanded us, and he has commanded us to love one another, just as you heard from the beginning.*" **Q: Are you loving others frequently & consistently in your life? Do you demonstrate love for others consistently? Do you love God's commands? Do you love others as Jesus loved you?**

12/7 - Today we start and finish the book of Third John! Yes, it is quite a lengthy letter... :) This letter, like the 2 before it were written by the disciple John in about 85 to 95 A.D. The purpose of this letter is actually somewhat the opposite of the purpose of Second John. In Second John - see yesterday's post below - we learned that John was warning against providing hospitality to traveling false teachers. In Third John, John is asking Gaius to show hospitality to traveling teachers - but teachers that are teaching the truth. The unfortunate aspect of today's letter is that there is a bit of a dictator leading the local church named Diotrephes who is not welcoming in traveling teachers who teach the truth - the Gospel. So, I think we can learn from Second John & Third John that hospitality is obviously a very good thing - though, we should exercise caution with hospitality when there is danger of propagating a false teaching.

~ Third John ~

Author: John the apostle

Place: Uncertain, probably Ephesus

Date: A.D. 85-95

Content: This short letter is a personal note from John the apostle to his friend Gaius, encouraging him to support the traveling evangelists who are preaching the truth. He warns Gaius against such men as Diotrephes who refuse to help in spreading the gospel and commends others, such as Demetrius, for helping.

Theme: Christians are to support one another in the work of Christ. Not to do so is the work of Satan, who seeks to destroy the believers. John stresses that all believers are bound together as Christians and should work for the common good of all. (*Above commentary is from Tyndale Publishers "The One Year Bible Companion" p. 34*)

12/7 - Verse 11 stands out in this letter, following John's writing about Diotrephes behavior - "*Dear friend, don't let this bad example influence you. Follow only what is good. Remember that those who do good prove that they are God's children, and those who do evil prove that they do not know God.*" **Q: Do we have examples of good and bad leaders in our life? Do we follow only the example of the good? Do you believe following the example of people doing good is proof that we are children of God?**

12/8 - Today we start and finish the book of Jude! Revelation begins tomorrow!

~ Jude ~

Author: Jude, a brother of Jesus

Place: Uncertain

Date: A.D. 65-70

Content: It is not known to whom this letter was addressed, but the problem that Jude confronts is very clear. Jude is urging the believers to stand firm against some false teachers and the false doctrine that they bring. In a lengthy passage Jude gives examples of judgment in the past that God visited upon sin, as well as a devastating description of the evil lives of those false teachers. Jude closes with an exhortation to the Christians to stand fast in the power of God who will keep us from falling.

Theme: The danger of false doctrine and the need for constant vigilance by the church is the theme of this book. Jude admonishes us to examine what people say and the kind of lives that they live so that we may approve what is pleasing in the sight of God. We may call upon God to help in this with full assurance that he will hear and answer our prayer. (Above commentary is from "The One Year Bible Companion" pp. 34-35)

12/8 - The letter of Jude carries forward some of the themes in John's letter's we've recently read about false teachers. This letter was written in about 65 A.D. From Jude & John, it seems like there were obviously some issues of false teachers back in the early church. People that twisted the truth of who Jesus was. I read a commentary today which said the twisted truths back then were basically these: 1. Jesus was not divine. He was just a man who was infused with the divinity of "the Christ" when he was Baptized in the Jordan, but that the divine nature left him before he died on the cross. (this would be a huge issue for theology... it ain't true folks...) and 2. Once you believe in Christ and your sins are forgiven, then you have a license to do whatever you want in life. You're home free. Feel free to be as immoral as you want. (again not true of course...). Early Gnosticism was a part of the problem with these lines of thinking. The early Gnostics basically believed that anything of matter/material/flesh was bad, and anything of the spirit was good. Hence, their belief that Jesus really couldn't have been a man and God at the same time - and that once they were saved/ believed in Christ, then their sins were forgiven in the spiritual realm, so they could do whatever the heck they wanted. They veered way off the path of Truth... All this to say - it is so easy for theology to get twisted around. It happened back in the early church as we see in Jude's letter today, and in John's previous letters. And it happens today. Something I heard recently that I liked and that I believe is so true. The Gospel is not complicated. It's simple. If you want the straightforward simple truth of the gospel, head for the Gospel of John in the New Testament and everything you basically need to know is there. That's it. We don't need to complicate things so much that we get ourselves caught up in ideas that basically create barriers to our relationship with God. God who loves us so much and wants to be in relationship with us... we have a good way of complicating this very simple love relationship! :)

12/8 - Verse 24 is so wonderful at the end of Jude's letter today:- *"And now, all glory to God, who is able to keep you from stumbling, and who will bring you into his glorious presence innocent of sin and with great joy."* Great joy indeed I believe can only be found through our relationship with God! There are other temporary happinesses we experience in life. But great joy... that's God.

12/9 - Today we start the book of Revelation! I have to confess that I have been a bit nervous about blogging through the book of Revelation. But here goes nothing! :) Revelation has been called "The Revelation of John", but really this book is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ". It is believed that the apostle John wrote this book. He also wrote the Gospel of John and the letters of First, Second, and Third John. There was some dispute about the apostle John writing this book in the third century by a bishop named Dionysius - as he thought the writing style of this book was so different from the Gospel of John & his letters. But most do believe that the apostle John did indeed write the book of Revelation on the Island of Patmos, off the coast of Ephesus, or modern-day Turkey. It is said that one of the major purposes of this book, written in circa 95 A.D., was to encourage Christians to resist the Roman empire's demands of emperor worship. The other important thing to note is the Revelation is apocalyptic literature, which means that its writing is highly symbolic. There are basically 4 lines of thinking on how to interpret the book of Revelation, which I think are helpful to consider before diving into this book. I am editing these comments below from bible.org at this link: [Please check out this link](#) for more details on these 4 points below and the book of Revelation overall - these comments were edited on bible.org from M. C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*.

"(1) The **preterist** approach believes that "Revelation is simply a sketch of the conditions of the empire in the first century."

(2) The **historicist** view (or continuous-historicist view) "contends that Revelation is a symbolic presentation of the entire course of the history of the church from the close of the first century to the end of time."

(3) The **futurist** approach usually argues that "all of the visions from Revelation 4:1 to the end of the book are yet to be fulfilled in the period immediately preceding and following the second advent of Christ."

(4) In the **idealist** approach, "the Revelation represents the eternal conflict of good and evil which persists in every age, although here it may have particular application to the period of the church."

12/9 - Into the readings today... Chapter 1 verse 8 certainly stands out in today's readings, as we hear from Jesus himself: *"I am the Alpha and the Omega--the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come, the Almighty One."* I like that - the Alpha & Omega. The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Jesus is the beginning and end of all things. Jesus is God. In verses 17 & 18 today we hear this similar theme from Jesus again to John: *"Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one who died. Look, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave."* It is awesome that Jesus uses the term Living One here. This is very similar to Old Testament verses we hear about God being a Living God. Jesus is also truly Living today in our lives. **Q: Do you believe Jesus is the Alpha & Omega? The Living One?**

12/10 - Revelation chapter 2 begins our journey of Jesus' messages to the seven churches in Asia Minor! (modern day Turkey). Depending on what type of Bible you read, you might notice that **ALL of the words in chapter 2 in today's readings are highlighted red** - meaning, we are hearing directly from Jesus in these verses, so it's good to pay attention here! :) The beginning of Revelation 2 verse 2 stands out to me today - *"I know all the things you do."* Short and simple.... **Q: Do you suppose this is true about Jesus and your life? Do you think Jesus knows all of the things you do? Even every single thing that you think?**

12/10 - Verse 7 certainly stands out today as well from Jesus: *"Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Everyone who is victorious will eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God."* The tree of life takes us back to the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve ended up eating from the forbidden tree of knowledge - which gave them the knowledge of good and evil. God then banished them from the Garden before they could eat from the tree of life and live eternally. The tree of life represents eternal life, and as we see in this verse it is offered to all who are victorious. **Q: What does it mean to be victorious? Do you want to eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God? Will you listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying?**

12/10 - Verse 17 is intriguing! *"Everyone who is victorious will eat of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it."* The second sentence is very intriguing to me - a white stone will be given with a new name upon it. I need to do some more research on what exactly this means. If anyone has thoughts on the white stone / new name, please share.

12/11 - Revelation chapter 2 verse 19 is awesome as Jesus says: *"I know all the things you do--your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things."* **Q: How are you doing in these areas in your life? Are you focusing on love, faith, service and patience? Are you constantly improving in these areas in your life?**

12/11 - Revelation chapter 3 verse 3 is powerful from Jesus: *"Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly and turn to me again."* My thought here is that sometimes we are so on fire for our faith in Jesus and God – particularly when we first believe. And then this fire and initial strong faith begins to wane over time. And to a degree, this is okay. We will not be on the "mountaintop" all of the time – we must traverse through the valleys as well. **Q: But, if perhaps we've been camped out in the valleys for a bit too long now, is it possible that we might need to go back to what we heard and believed at first? Might we need to hold to these first beliefs more firmly? And turn to Jesus again? This Advent and Christmas season, will you return to Jesus once again? Will you return to the Manger in Bethlehem?**

PSALM 124:1 - 130:8

12/5 - I read in a commentary that Psalm 124 was likely a call and response from a Levitical priest and worshipers. Verses 1 through 5 were likely spoken by the priest and verses 6 through 8 were the response of the people. Great way to read this Psalm! Even though this Psalm title says it is a "Psalm of David", some commentaries believe this Psalm is post-exile from Babylon based on verse 8: *"We escaped like a bird from a hunter's trap. The trap is broken, and we are*

free!" Though, I could see that verse apply to Davidic times too. Verse 8 is a joyful response that hopefully each one of us can sing confidently: *"Our help is from the LORD, who made the heavens and the earth."* Amen and Amen!

12/6 - Psalm 125 has great verses in 4 & 5: *"O LORD, do good to those who are good, whose hearts are in tune with you. But banish those who turn to crooked ways, O LORD. Take them away with those who do evil. And let Israel have quietness and peace."* I love that closing line - let us have quietness and peace! What a great prayer. Don't we all wish for quietness and peace in our lives? One thing I'll recommend - which I am trying so hard to learn myself - is to take a Sabbath day of rest each week. Just rest. Just be peaceful. Just be with God. One day a week. It will dramatically change the other 6 days of your week without a doubt. **Q: Will you join me on this quest for quietness and peace in our lives by taking a Sabbath day of rest once each week?**

12/7 - Psalm 126 has a great verse today. I always love the verses in Psalms that speak about water! I don't know what it is about these verses, but here's verse 4: *"Restore our fortunes, LORD, as streams renew the desert."* **Q: Do you believe that God can restore your life like water restores the desert? Will you allow God's water into all the nooks & crannies in your life that are in need of renewal? Do you believe that God is living water? Are you thirsty for that living water in your life? Will you drink the Water?**

12/8 - Psalm 127 verse 1 I think I heard for the first time verbally a couple of years ago on a Habitat for Humanity job site. Each morning the volunteers would take turns leading devotions before the day's build. One morning a volunteer read Psalm 127 verse 1 to all of us, which was absolutely fitting for working on a Habitat house - *"Unless the LORD builds a house, the work of the builders is useless. Unless the LORD protects a city, guarding it with sentries will do no good."* Great stuff and I believe this verse is not only applicable to working on Habitat houses, but is very applicable in our own lives as well. **Q: Are there things we are building or creating in our life that might be outside of God's will for our life? Are we building these things on our own? If so, should we be building these things? Will we take to prayer all that we build in our lives and seek God's guidance and blessing upon our work? Is God building our life or are we attempting to build with our own power? Is God protecting our life or are we attempting to protect ourselves with our own power?**

12/8 - Speaking of work, I also love verse 2 in this Psalm: *"It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night, anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to his loved ones."* Great verse to combat our workaholic tendencies, no? :) **Q: Do you overwork yourself these days? What for? Is this pleasing to God? Are you taking a Sabbath day of rest once a week to simply be in relationship with God? To enjoy God's rest?**

12/9 - Psalm 128 verse 1 stands out today: *"How happy are those who fear the LORD-- all who follow his ways!"* **Q: Do you think it is possible to be happy and to fear God at the same time? Do you believe a healthy fear of God is, well, healthy? Why would we fear God - God who loves us immensely? What is this Psalmist saying to us today in our lives?**

12/10 - Psalm 129 is a prayer for the continuing withering of Israel's enemies and verse 4 likely represents a celebration from Babylonian captivity - *"But the LORD is good; he has cut the cords used by the ungodly to bind me."* **Q: How about in our lives today? Has Jesus cut any cords used by the ungodly to bind you? Are there still some cords being used by the ungodly to bind you? Will you let Jesus cut those cords? Will you let Jesus free you from that captivity? Do you believe that Jesus is good and that he wants to cut the cords that bind you? Do you believe that Jesus cares for you?**

12/11 - Psalm 130 is amazing today! Each verse is jam packed with good stuff to think about.... Actually - if you get a chance - please read through each of these verses again, and meditate for a moment on each one and what each verse might be speaking into your life and your heart. I think you will find tons of relevant meditations in this Psalm for your life. Today in Psalm 130 verse 5 we read - *"I am counting on the LORD; yes, I am counting on him. I have put my hope in his word."* **Q: Are you counting on God in your life? Really counting on him? Have you put your hope in his Word, the Bible? Do you believe that reading and meditating and reflecting on the Bible can transform your life and your relationship with God? What is your plan next year to stay in God's Word each and every day? Should you have a plan to be in God's Word each and every day?**

PROVERBS 29:5 - 29:22

12/5 - Today in Proverbs chapter 29 verse 7 we read: *"The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern."* **Q: Do you care about justice for the poor? Are you involved in caring for the poor locally and internationally on a regular basis? Do you contribute financially to organizations that care for the poor? Do you volunteer with organizations that care for the poor?** For some reason this Proverb reminds me of the Martin Luther King Jr. quote: "Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."

12/6 - Proverbs 29:11 teaches us today: *"A fool gives full vent to anger, but a wise person quietly holds it back."* This is a great reminder of not letting anger take over our emotions. **Q: How are you doing with controlling your emotions these days? Do you allow emotions to take control over you? Is this healthy? Is this wise?**

12/7 Proverbs 29 verse 13 is a great reminder that we are all made in the image of God - *"The poor and the oppressor have this in common--the LORD gives light to the eyes of both."* **Q: Is one better than the other? Are both equal in God's sight? Should both be equal in our sight?**

12/8 - Proverbs 29 verses 15 & 17 are great reminders on the benefit of discipline in our lives! **Q: Do you realize, or believe, that God may discipline you on occasion? Do you believe this holy discipline is ultimately good for you? Do you think godly discipline help get you on the right road - and off the wrong road...?**

12/9 - It is very interesting that Proverbs 29 verse 18 may help answer these questions immediately above: *"When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild. But whoever obeys the law is happy."* **Q: Do you see parallels to this Proverb and the Psalm verse above? (12/9) Are you accepting divine guidance in your life? Are you happy?**

12/10 - Proverbs 29 verse 20 is fairly well known: *"There is more hope for a fool than for someone who speaks without thinking."* This a good reminder to think before speaking! Do you ever speak without thinking? Is this foolish? Do you listen more than you speak when you are with others? Do you speak wisely? Thoughtfully? Let us each think as we speak! And let us not speak incessantly...

12/11 - Proverbs 29 verse 21 teaches us today: *"A servant who is pampered from childhood will later become a rebel."* **Q: This is a good reminder not to spoil others - and how about not spoiling ourselves?** For some reason this verse reminds me of this old adage, paraphrased here - "God, please don't make me too rich that I forget about you. Nor too poor that I curse you." Let us be cautious not to be spoiled, nor to spoil others in our lives...

Group discussions:

- Introductions.
- What were some of your favorite verses or passages from the past week's readings?
- What are some questions that were generated for you based on the past week's readings?
- What is something new you learned about God or the Bible from the past week's readings?
- How did God speak to you through the past week's readings?
- What is something you want to change or grow in your life based on the past week's readings?
- **Discuss the bold Questions in the Study Notes**
- Any prayer requests for the group for the coming week?

Each group is encouraged to close in prayer.

Daily questions for this next week's readings you may want to journal or pray through and discuss with your group next Sunday:

- My favorite verses or passages:
- What I learned from the readings:
- My questions for further study:
- How God spoke to me through the Word:
- Something I want to change or grow in my life based on the Word:
- My prayer points based on the Word:

Visit www.OneYearBibleBlog.com this next week for daily commentary and questions for reflection.

[Copyright © 2004-2010 One Year Bible Blog](#)