

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 21 OF 104

Called and Chosen

Week 21 of 104 • 20% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Numbers 24-29
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 24
Gospels	Matthew 21:28-22:14
General New Testament	Acts 22:22-23:35

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

God keeps inviting, and people keep deciding. This week an entire generation that said no is counted out of the record and a new one is counted in, with only two names carried over from the old list. A father sends two sons to the vineyard, and the one who said no is the one who actually goes. A king throws a wedding and the invited guests have somewhere else to be. Proverbs hands you a quiet picture of a field gone to thorns, ruined not by disaster but by a little more sleep. And in a Roman barracks the Lord stands beside a prisoner in the dark and tells him he will yet speak in Rome. Being called is not the same thing as being chosen. What you do with the invitation is.

How to use this guide: Read all four passages during the week. Your teacher will take up two of them in class, one in each session. For the other two, work through the "Extended Class Discussion or Self-Study" questions on your own and write your answers in the space provided.

GENERAL OLD TESTAMENT Numbers 24-29

A New Generation Numbered

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Balaam finishes his oracles with a Star rising out of Jacob, and then Israel does to itself what Balak could not do to it, joining the feasts and the women of Moab until a plague kills twenty-four thousand. Phinehas acts, the plague stops, and God orders a second census. Not one man counted at Sinai is left except Caleb and Joshua. Five sisters bring an inheritance case and win it, Joshua is commissioned before the whole assembly, and the book lays out the calendar of Israel's offerings and feasts.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Chapter 25 follows immediately on four oracles declaring Israel blessed and untouchable, and within a few verses the nation is at Moab's tables and twenty-four thousand are dead. How do people who have just been assured of God's favor end up there, and where does that same pattern show up in a congregation that considers itself sound?

2. Numbers 26 counts a whole new generation, and verses 64 and 65 note that not one man numbered at Sinai remains except Caleb and Joshua. Sit with that a moment. How does the second census display God's patience, God's seriousness, and God's faithfulness to His promise all at the same time?
3. At the end of his life Moses asks God to set a man over the congregation so that the people will not be as sheep without a shepherd (27:15–17). What does that request reveal about what mattered most to him, and who are you preparing to pick up what you are currently carrying?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Numbers 25:1–13 and list the steps by which Israel moved from a shared meal to idolatry to judgment. Where in an ordinary week does that sequence usually begin for a person today?
2. Compare the tribal totals in Numbers 26 with those in Numbers 1. Note which tribes grew and which shrank, and then write a sentence on the significance of 26:64–65.
3. Five sisters bring a hard case to Moses in 27:1–11 and God rules in their favor. Note carefully how they came, what they said, and what they did not do. What does their approach model for someone who believes he has been wronged?
4. Read Numbers 24:15–19 and then Revelation 22:16 and Acts 2:33–36. What finally comes of the promise of a Scepter rising out of Israel, and how does the New Testament describe the reach of that dominion?
5. Phinehas acted while everyone else stood weeping at the door of the tabernacle (25:6–8). Without imitating his spear, name one situation you have been grieving over and have the standing to address, and set a day this week to address it.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 24

By Wisdom a House Is Built

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

This chapter moves from the inside out. It tells you not to envy evil men, and then says that a house is built by wisdom and its rooms filled by knowledge. It commands you to rescue those being dragged toward death and refuses to accept ignorance as an excuse. It says a righteous man falls seven times and gets up. It forbids

gloating when your enemy stumbles. And it closes with a man walking past a lazy man's vineyard, looking at the thorns, and drawing a lesson.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Proverbs 24:11–12 tells you to deliver those being led away to death and then refuses the excuse, “we did not know this.” Who in your life is being drawn toward death right now, and how does this passage answer the excuses we usually reach for?
2. Verse 16 says a righteous man falls seven times and rises again. How is that different from the way many Christians handle their own failures, and what practically makes it possible for a person to get back up rather than quit?
3. Verses 17 and 18 forbid rejoicing when your enemy falls. Why would God care what goes on inside us when someone who hurt us finally gets what is coming to him, and what does that concern say about the kind of people He is making?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace the building imagery through 24:3–4, 24:15, and 24:27. Note what is being built in each verse, and write out the order verse 27 gives for doing it.
2. Read Proverbs 24:11–12 alongside James 4:17 and Luke 10:30–37. Write two sentences on the sin of doing nothing, and name the place it most often shows up in your own week.
3. List everything 24:30–34 tells you about the sluggard's field, the condition it was in, and how it got that way. How long does that kind of ruin actually take?
4. Verses 21 and 22 join fearing the Lord and honoring the king. Read Romans 13:1–7 and 1 Peter 2:13–17, then describe the honor a Christian owes a government whose decisions he dislikes.
5. Verse 27 says to prepare your work outside, make it ready in the field, and afterward build your house. Name one thing in your life you have been building before its foundation was laid, and write down the one step you will take this week to put it back in order.

Three Parables of Refusal

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus answers the question about His authority with three stories, each one sharper than the last. A father sends two sons into the vineyard, and only the one who first refused actually goes. A landowner sends servants and finally his son to tenants who beat, stone, and kill them, and loses the vineyard to others. A king prepares a wedding for his son, the guests will not come, and the invitation goes out to everyone on the highways. Then one guest is found without a wedding garment.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In the parable of the two sons (21:28–32) one says no and goes, and the other says yes and stays home. Which of the two is a long-established congregation more likely to produce, and what would have to change for the second son to become the first?
2. At the end of the vineyard parable Jesus says the kingdom of God will be taken from these leaders and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it (21:43). Who receives the vineyard, and what specific fruits is the owner looking for?
3. The wedding invitation went to everyone on the streets, both bad and good (22:9–10), and yet one man is bound and cast out for not wearing a wedding garment. Why is he put out when he was invited like everyone else, and how does a person make sure he is clothed?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Isaiah 5:1–7 before you read Matthew 21:33–41. List every detail Jesus borrows from Isaiah, and then name the detail He adds that Isaiah does not have.
2. Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22–23 in 21:42. Look up Acts 4:10–12 and 1 Peter 2:4–8 and trace how the apostles used the very same verse. Who is the stone, and who are the builders?
3. Take the three parables in order, the two sons, the vineyard, and the wedding. Write one sentence on what each adds to the one before it.
4. Matthew 21:32 says tax collectors and harlots believed John, and that the leaders, having seen it, did not afterward relent and believe. Why is it harder for a respectable person to repent than for a notorious one? Read Luke 18:9–14 before you answer.
5. The first son said no and then went. Identify one thing you have already told God no about, whether with words or simply by putting it off, and go do it this week before you tell anyone you have changed your mind.

Be of Good Cheer, Paul**WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE**

One word, Gentiles, and the crowd erupts again. The Roman commander orders Paul examined by scourging until Paul asks whether it is lawful to scourge a Roman citizen uncondemned. The next day he stands before the council, is struck on the mouth, and divides the room by raising the resurrection. That night the Lord stands by him and tells him he will testify in Rome. Forty men swear to kill him, a nephew overhears the plot, and Paul leaves Jerusalem under heavy guard for Caesarea and Felix.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Twice in this reading Paul uses a legal protection instead of quietly accepting mistreatment (22:25 and 23:6, and again through his nephew in 23:16–22). How does that square with turning the other cheek, and how would you decide which response a situation calls for?
2. In 23:11 the Lord stands by Paul at night and says, “Be of good cheer.” Look carefully at what had just happened and at what was about to happen. Why would Paul need that word on that particular night, and what exactly did the Lord promise him and not promise him?
3. Paul says in 23:1 that he has lived in all good conscience before God to this day, then in 23:3 calls the high priest a whitewashed wall, and in 23:5 backs down the moment Scripture is brought to bear. What do those three verses together teach about conscience, temper, and submitting to the Word even when you are in the right?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything that happens to Paul from 22:22 through 23:35 in order. Count how many times his life is preserved, and note the means God used each time.
2. Read Acts 23:6–10. Decide whether Paul’s statement about the resurrection was a maneuver or the truth, and support your answer from Acts 24:15 and 26:6–8.
3. Paul is struck at the high priest’s command and answers sharply, then quotes Exodus 22:28 when corrected. Compare how Jesus answered the same treatment in John 18:22–23, and read 1 Peter 2:21–23. What is the difference, and what is the same?
4. Forty men bound themselves under a curse not to eat until they had killed Paul (23:12–15). Trace step by step how God undid that plot, and note how ordinary every one of the means was.

5. Paul's young nephew did a brave thing with information he happened to overhear. Name one thing you know that someone else needs to hear, decide who it is, and set the day this week you will tell them.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Numbers 30-36 · Proverbs 25 · Matthew 22:15-46 · Acts 24:1-25:12

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