

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 22 OF 104

Rendering What Is Due

Week 22 of 104 • 21% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Numbers 30–36
Wisdom Literature	Proverbs 25
Gospels	Matthew 22:15–46
General New Testament	Acts 24:1–25:12

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Somebody owes somebody something in every one of this week's readings. Israel learns that a vow is a debt you signed with your mouth, that a man who killed by accident is owed a hearing and a man who killed on purpose is owed justice, and that two and a half tribes owe their brothers a war they could easily have sat out. Proverbs hands you a smaller ledger: the right word owed to a weary friend, a cup of water owed to an enemy, a private matter owed silence. In the temple courts Jesus holds up a coin and says give Caesar his and give God His. And in Caesarea a governor who owes a prisoner justice keeps him two years instead, hoping for a bribe.

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 30–36

Vows, Boundaries, and Refuge

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The book closes with the details of settling a land. God binds a man to his word and provides for vows made inside a household. Israel executes judgment on Midian for the seduction at Peor, and Balaam dies with them. Reuben and Gad ask for pastureland east of the Jordan and are told they may have it only if they cross over armed ahead of their brothers. Moses records every stage of the wilderness route, God fixes the borders, forty-eight Levitical cities are set aside, and six of them are made cities of refuge.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Numbers 30:2 says that when a man vows a vow he shall not break his word. Read that beside Ecclesiastes 5:4–5 and Matthew 5:33–37. Why does God attach such weight to what we say, and where are we most casual about promises we have already made?
2. Reuben and Gad ask for the land on the near side of the Jordan, and Moses responds as though Kadesh were happening all over again (32:6–15). What was he afraid of, and what does the agreement they finally reach show about what they owed their brothers?

3. The cities of refuge protect the man who killed accidentally and refuse to shelter the murderer (35:9–34). Walk through how the system worked. How does it hold justice and mercy together, and what does it say about the worth of a single human life?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the six cities of refuge from Numbers 35:13–14 and Joshua 20:7–8, and note where each sits on the map. Why did their placement matter so much to a frightened man running for his life?
2. Numbers 32:23 contains the famous line, “be sure your sin will find you out.” Read it in its full context, then compare Galatians 6:7–8 and Hebrews 4:13. Who exactly was Moses warning, and about what?
3. Skim the stages recorded in Numbers 33 and pick out three places you remember from earlier in the story. Write a sentence on what happened at each. Why would God have Moses keep the list?
4. Numbers 35:31 forbids accepting a ransom for the life of a murderer. What does that statute say about the worth of the victim, and how does it differ from the way people usually speak about the death of a stranger?
5. Reuben and Gad promised not to return to their own houses until every Israelite had received his inheritance (32:18). Name one commitment you made to a brother or sister in Christ that you never finished, and set the date you will finish it.

WISDOM LITERATURE Proverbs 25

A Word Fitly Spoken

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Here begins a collection of Solomon’s proverbs copied out by the men of Hezekiah, and it is full of pictures. Apples of gold in settings of silver. Cold water to a weary soul. A man who boasts of a gift he never gives, like clouds and wind without rain. Coals of fire heaped on an enemy’s head by kindness. A backbiting tongue and the north wind. Too much honey. And the last picture in the chapter, a man with no rule over his own spirit, standing like a city with its walls torn down.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Proverbs 25:11 compares a word fitly spoken to apples of gold in settings of silver. Think of a time someone said exactly the right thing to you at exactly the right moment. What made it land, and what mistake does verse 20 describe when we get the timing wrong?
2. Verse 28 says a man with no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down and without walls. Picture that literally for a moment. What walks into an undefended city, and where in your own life are the walls lowest right now?
3. Verses 21 and 22 tell you to give your hungry enemy bread and your thirsty enemy water, and Paul quotes the passage in Romans 12:20. Work out together what the coals of fire mean, and then say what this would actually require of you toward the person you find hardest to love.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Collect every proverb in this chapter that deals with speech, and sort your list into three columns: what to say, when to say it, and when to say nothing at all.
2. Read Proverbs 25:6–7 and then Luke 14:7–11. Note how Jesus uses the proverb and what He adds to it that Solomon does not say.
3. Verse 2 says it is the glory of God to conceal a matter and the glory of kings to search one out. Compare Deuteronomy 29:29. Which things has God kept to Himself, and how should that shape the way we handle questions Scripture never answers?
4. Verses 16 and 27 both warn about eating too much honey. Name three genuinely good things in your life that turn harmful in excess, and describe how you can tell when you have crossed the line in each one.
5. Verse 9 says to debate your case with your neighbor himself and not to reveal another's secret. Think of a conflict you are currently discussing with people who are not part of it. Decide who you will go to directly this week, and stop talking to everyone else about it.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Three groups come at Jesus in turn, each with a question designed to trap Him. The Pharisees and Herodians ask about paying taxes to Caesar. The Sadducees, who deny the resurrection, invent a woman with seven husbands. A lawyer asks which is the great commandment in the law. Jesus answers each one and then asks a question of His own, about whose son the Christ is, which nobody can answer. From that day on, Matthew says, no one dared ask Him anything else.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The Pharisees and Herodians try to catch Jesus between Rome and the crowd (22:15–22), and His answer separates what belongs to Caesar from what belongs to God. Where do those two claims overlap in your own life, and how do you tell the difference between an inconvenience and an actual conflict?
2. Jesus tells the Sadducees they are mistaken because they know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (22:29), and then proves the resurrection from the tense of a verb in Exodus 3:6. What does His argument assume about the Bible, and how carefully does it suggest we ought to be reading it?
3. The last question is the one Jesus asks: how can the Christ be both David's son and David's Lord (22:41–46)? Read Psalm 110:1 with Acts 2:33–36 and Hebrews 10:12–13. Where is Christ seated right now, and what difference should that make to you on a hard Tuesday afternoon?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the four questions in this passage, who asked each one, and what each questioner was hoping to gain. Then note how Jesus answered each: with a coin, with a text, with two commandments, and with a question.
2. Read Exodus 3:6 and then Matthew 22:31–32. Write out Jesus' argument for the resurrection step by step in your own words, and explain why the present tense matters.
3. Jesus says all the Law and the Prophets hang on two commandments (22:37–40). Look up Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and Leviticus 19:18, and then Romans 13:8–10 and 1 John 4:20–21. How do the two commands relate, and can either be kept while the other is neglected?
4. Trace the reaction of the crowd and the questioners through 22:22, 22:33, 22:34, and 22:46. What is the cumulative effect, and why does the silence of verse 46 matter for the week that follows it?
5. Loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind is not a feeling you can summon on command. Choose one of the three, name the specific area where you have been holding something back from Him, and hand it over this week in a way you could point to on a calendar.

Before Felix and Festus

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A hired orator named Tertullus opens the case against Paul with flattery and three charges. Paul answers plainly, admitting only that he worships the God of his fathers according to the Way. Felix, who knows more about Christianity than he lets on, adjourns the hearing and keeps Paul for two years, sending for him often and hoping for a bribe. When Paul reasons about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix trembles and sends him away. Festus arrives, and Paul appeals to Caesar.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Compare the speech of Tertullus (24:2–8) with Paul’s answer (24:10–21). What is different about how each man handles the truth, and which of Tertullus’s habits show up in ordinary conversation among good people?
2. Paul reasons with Felix about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, and Felix trembles and puts him off until a convenient season (24:24–25). Why those three subjects for this particular man, and what finally happened to the convenient season?
3. Paul spent two years in custody while a governor waited on a bribe (24:26–27). Two years of an apostle’s life, and nothing visible got done. How do you keep serving God faithfully in a stretch where nothing appears to be moving?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the charges Tertullus brings in 24:5–6, then find Paul’s answer to each one in 24:10–21. Which charge does Paul admit, and how does he reframe it?
2. Paul states his own faith in 24:14–15. Write out his confession in three parts, and compare it with Acts 26:6–8 and 1 Corinthians 15:12–22.
3. Read Acts 24:16, where Paul says he strives to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. What daily practices would that require, and how would a person know if his conscience had quietly drifted?
4. Trace the political calculations of Felix in 24:26–27 and of Festus in 25:9. What was each governor trying to gain, and at whose expense? Compare Proverbs 29:25.

5. Felix trembled and did nothing. Write down the last time a passage of Scripture or a sermon genuinely convicted you, and what you actually did about it. If the honest answer is nothing, do that thing this week.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Deuteronomy 1-5 · Proverbs 26 · Matthew 23 · Acts 25:13-26:32

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