

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 43 OF 104

The Lord, He Is God

Week 43 of 104 • 41% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	1 Kings 18-22
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 34
Gospels	Mark 11:15-12:17
General New Testament	1 Corinthians 12-13

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Everything this week comes down to authority. On Carmel, Elijah stands a nation between two altars and states the terms out loud: the God who answers by fire, let Him be God. In the temple courts the chief priests corner Jesus and demand to know by what authority He overturned their tables, and He answers with a question they are too calculating to touch. Paul writes to a congregation dazzled by spectacular gifts and tells them the Spirit distributed those gifts as He chose, that every one of them would stop, and that love would not. And David, who once drooled into his beard to convince a Philistine king he was harmless, sits down and says the only thing worth saying: taste and see that the Lord is good.

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 1 Kings 18-22

Fire, Whisper, and a Vineyard

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

After three years of drought Elijah walks back into Ahab's world and calls the nation to Carmel. Four hundred fifty prophets of Baal cry out all day to a god who does not answer; Elijah soaks his altar, prays fifty words, and the fire falls. Then Jezebel sends one message and the prophet runs for his life, collapses under a broom tree, and asks to die. From there the reading moves through Syrian wars, a stolen vineyard, and a lone prophet named Micaiah.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Elijah asks how long Israel will go limping between two opinions, and the people answer him not a word (18:21). What does that silence actually mean, and where do we practice the same silence?
2. Elijah goes from the greatest day of his life to asking God to take it, within a single chapter. Trace everything God does for him in 19:5-18, in order, and talk about what that reveals about how God handles exhausted people.

3. Ahab wanted a vegetable garden, and it cost Naboth his life and his family their inheritance. Where does ordinary, unremarkable covetousness start doing real damage in our lives, and what actually stops it?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Count everything Elijah does before the fire falls in 18:30–37, including the four barrels poured three times. Why would he go out of his way to make the miracle harder?
2. Compare the prayer of Baal's prophets in 18:26–29 with Elijah's prayer in 18:36–37. List every difference you can find, then read Matthew 6:7.
3. Read 1 Kings 19:5–18 and list what God gives Elijah: food, sleep, a question, a word, a commission, and a fact he did not know. Which of them does he appear to have needed first?
4. Micaiah stands alone against four hundred prophets in 22:6–28. Trace what he says, what it costs him, and how he answers the messenger who coaches him on the way in. Then read Galatians 1:10.
5. Elijah told a nation to quit limping between two opinions. Name the one area of your own life where you are limping, and the decision you will make this week that puts your weight on one foot.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 34

Taste and See

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The title puts this psalm on one of the worst days of David's life, the day he stood before a Philistine king and faked madness to save himself. Out of that comes a song of praise built line by line through the Hebrew alphabet. David calls others to magnify the Lord with him, tells how he sought God and was answered, and then turns teacher: come, children, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The title connects this psalm to the day David pretended to be insane to escape a Philistine king (1 Samuel 21:10–15). Read that account first, then read verse 1, and talk about what it means to bless the Lord at all times after a day like that.
2. Verse 8 says to taste and see that the Lord is good. Why would the psalm use a word about eating rather than a word about thinking, and what exactly is it asking a person to do?

3. Verses 12 through 14 give the recipe for loving life and seeing good days, and most of it concerns the tongue. Where would obeying those three verses cost you something specific this week?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Psalm 34 is an acrostic, one line for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Read it straight through and list every promise made to the person who fears the Lord.
2. Peter quotes Psalm 34:12–16 in 1 Peter 3:10–12. Read his use of it and note what he is asking of Christians who are being mistreated.
3. Verse 19 says many are the afflictions of the righteous and then promises deliverance out of them all. Explain how the two halves fit together, then read 2 Corinthians 4:17–18.
4. John 19:36 applies verse 20 to Jesus on the cross. Trace the connection, and note what John says was fulfilled and what had to be true for it to be fulfilled.
5. Verse 3 says, “O magnify the Lord with me,” which is spoken to somebody else. Name one person you will invite this week, to a service, to a meal at your table, or to read the Scriptures with you, and set the day.

GOSPELS Mark 11:15–12:17

By What Authority

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus walks back into the temple and clears it, overturning tables and refusing to let anyone carry merchandise through the courts. The next morning the disciples notice the fig tree withered, and Jesus talks about faith and about forgiving before you pray. Then the questions begin. The chief priests demand to know His authority and get a question about John instead. He tells a parable about a murdered son, and then turns Caesar’s coin into a claim on their lives.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus quotes Isaiah about a house of prayer for all nations while standing in the one court a Gentile was allowed to enter. How does that detail sharpen what He was actually angry about?

2. The chief priests demand to know by what authority He acts, and Jesus answers with a question about John's baptism. Look carefully at how they arrive at their answer in 11:31–33. What has happened to men who calculate their theology that way?
3. Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (12:17). Work out what goes in each hand, and talk about where that line actually runs for a Christian today.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List what Jesus overturned and what He refused to allow in 11:15–16. Read Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 and note the two passages He joined together.
2. Trace the parable of the vineyard in 12:1–11 and identify the owner, the vineyard, the servants, the son, and the others who receive the vineyard. Then read Isaiah 5:1–7.
3. Jesus ties prayer and forgiveness together in 11:25. Read Matthew 6:14–15 and state plainly what He says is at stake for the person who will not forgive.
4. The coin carried Caesar's image, so Jesus told them to give it back to him. Read Genesis 1:27 and consider what carries God's image and therefore belongs to God.
5. Name the one thing you have been rendering to Caesar, or to an employer, or to a hobby, that actually belongs to God. Decide what you will hand back this week, and when.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT 1 Corinthians 12–13

The More Excellent Way

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Corinth was a church with spectacular abilities and a ranking system to go with them. Paul answers with three arguments. First, every gift came from the same Spirit, who distributed them as He willed, so no one earned his and no one chose it. Second, the church is a body, where the parts that look least impressive turn out to be necessary. Third, all of the gifts were temporary. Prophecy would fail, tongues would cease. Love would not.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul says the same Spirit distributed the gifts as He willed, not as men chose (12:11). How does that one sentence dismantle both envy and pride in a congregation?

2. Paul insists the members that seem weaker are necessary and that the less honorable receive more honor (12:22–24). Who in a congregation fits that description, and how does a church actually practice verse 26?
3. First Corinthians 13:8–10 says prophecies will fail, tongues will cease, and knowledge will vanish away when that which is perfect comes. Work carefully through what “in part” and “perfect” mean in this context, and what follows for the church today.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the nine gifts named in 12:8–10 and then the offices and functions named in 12:28. Mark which of them are miraculous and which are not.
2. Trace Paul's questions in 12:29–30. What answer does the grammar of each question expect, and what does that settle about the claim that every Christian should speak in tongues?
3. Read Mark 16:20 and Hebrews 2:3–4 and state the stated purpose of miraculous signs. Then read Ephesians 4:11–14 and Jude 3 and consider whether that purpose has been accomplished.
4. Write out 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 and read it with your own name in the place of the word love. Which line is hardest to read that way, and why that one?
5. Paul says that without love the most spectacular gift is nothing. Name the one relationship where you have been technically right and genuinely unloving, and name what you will do about it this week.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: 2 Kings 1–8 • Psalm 35–36 • Mark 12:18–13:13 • 1 Corinthians 14

More studies available on ChurchOfChristBibleStudies.com