

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 45 OF 104

When the Walls Fall

Week 45 of 104 • 43% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	2 Kings 9–17
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 37
Gospels	Mark 13:14–14:11
General New Testament	1 Corinthians 15:1–34

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Some things that look permanent are not. Samaria had walls, an army, a royal line, and two hundred years of momentum, and in a single paragraph of 2 Kings 17 it is gone, with the reasons listed plainly enough that no one could claim surprise. Jesus walks out of a temple that had taken decades to build and says it is coming down inside a generation. A woman in Bethany breaks a jar worth a year's wages over His head and is scolded for it. And Paul, writing to people who had begun to doubt the resurrection, sets one fact in the middle of the rubble and refuses to move it: Christ is risen. Everything else in your life is on a timetable. That is not.

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 2 Kings 9–17

Why Samaria Fell

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jehu is anointed in a back room and rides out to end the house of Ahab, and the killing does not stop for two chapters. In Judah, Athaliah murders the royal family and an aunt hides one baby in the temple for six years. Elisha dies, kings rise and fall at speed, Assyria begins collecting tribute, and Ahaz copies a foreign altar he liked in Damascus. Then Samaria is besieged for three years, falls, and Israel is carried away. Chapter 17 stops the story and explains exactly why.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jehu wipes out Baal worship with remarkable thoroughness and even says, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord" (10:16), and then 10:29–31 tells us he never left the golden calves and did not take care to walk in God's law with all his heart. Talk about selective zeal, and about how a person can be fierce against one sin while protecting another.

2. Second Kings 17:7–23 stops the narrative and lists the reasons Israel fell. Read the list slowly as a class and notice how many times the word “yet” or “still” appears in God’s dealings with them. What does that say about how long He waited, and about how we misread patience?
3. The resettled peoples “feared the Lord, and served their own gods” (17:33, 41), and the writer clearly considers that a disaster rather than a compromise. Where does that same arrangement show up in a modern Christian’s life, and why is it so much easier to live with than open rebellion?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out every reason given in 17:7–18 for the fall of Israel. Sort them into three columns: wrong worship, wrong conduct toward people, and refusal to listen. Note which column is longest.
2. Trace what Jehosheba does in 11:1–3 and what Jehoiada does in 11:4–12. Then read Matthew 1:8–9 and Luke 1:32–33, and describe what was riding on one hidden child and one faithful aunt.
3. Compare 2 Kings 17:13 with 2 Chronicles 36:15–16 and Jeremiah 25:4. List the words these passages use for how God sent His messengers and how the people responded.
4. In 13:14–19 the dying Elisha tells Joash to strike the ground with arrows, and Joash strikes three times and stops. Explain what was being tested, and what the prophet’s anger says about half-hearted obedience.
5. Name one command of Christ you have been keeping at about sixty percent, the way Jehu kept his. Say specifically what full obedience would look like, and do that this week rather than next.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 37

Fret Not Yourself

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

An old man writes down what he has learned about watching wicked people prosper. The psalm is an acrostic, working through the Hebrew alphabet, and it circles back again and again to two facts: the prosperity of the wicked is temporary, and the future belongs to the meek. Along the way it hands you a string of commands you can actually obey this afternoon, including trust, delight, commit, rest, wait, and cease from anger, and it closes with a picture of the end of both roads.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The psalm opens by commanding us not to fret, which sounds like being told not to have a headache. Read 37:1–8 together and describe what fretting actually is, and why God can command it to stop.
2. In 37:25 the psalmist says he has been young and now is old, and has not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread. Given Hebrews 11:36–38 and the life of Job, how should we understand that sentence, and what goes wrong when we treat it as an absolute guarantee?
3. Three times this psalm says the meek, the blessed, and those who wait on the Lord will inherit the earth, and Jesus picks it up in Matthew 5:5. Discuss what meekness actually is, and name a situation this week where it will look like weakness to everyone watching.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the imperatives of 37:1–8 in order, from “do not fret” through “cease from anger.” Then write beside each one what a person would have to believe about God in order to obey it.
2. Collect every image the psalm uses for the end of the wicked: grass, herbs, smoke, a bow broken, a tree that could not be found. Note how many of them involve something that looked impressive right up until it did not.
3. Read 37:23–24 next to Proverbs 24:16 and Micah 7:8. Describe the difference between a righteous man who falls and a wicked man who falls, and what the passages say God does in the first case.
4. Trace generosity through the psalm: 37:21, 37:26, and the contrast with the wicked who borrows and does not repay. Then read 2 Corinthians 9:6–8, and write down what the two passages assume about God’s supply.
5. Envy is the sin this psalm treats as the real danger. Name one person whose life you have envied. Thank God for that person specifically in prayer this week, and do them one good turn they will not see coming.

GOSPELS Mark 13:14–14:11

Take Heed and Watch

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus finishes the discourse He began on the Mount of Olives: when you see the abomination of desolation, run, and do not stop for a coat. He describes days of unmatched distress, warns about false christs, uses the old prophetic language of a darkened sun and falling stars, and says this generation will not pass away before it happens. Then no one knows the day. Then a plot, a woman with an alabaster flask, an outbreak of indignation, and Judas walking out to make a deal.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The instructions in 13:14–18 are startlingly local and urgent: those in Judea flee to the mountains, do not go down into the house, do not go back for a garment, pray it is not winter. Read Luke 21:20–24 alongside them and discuss what event Jesus is describing and how those instructions actually saved lives.
2. Jesus says in 13:32 that no one knows the day or the hour, and then tells a small story about a man who leaves home and a doorkeeper told to watch. If watching does not mean calculating dates, describe what it looks like on an ordinary Tuesday afternoon.
3. A woman pours out ointment worth a year's wages and the room turns on her, while Jesus says she has done what she could (14:3–9). What made her gift offensive to the people watching, and what have you been holding back because someone might call it waste?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the instructions in 13:14–20 and mark how many of them only make sense for people living in one place at one time. Then state what that observation contributes to understanding the passage.
2. Read Isaiah 13:9–13, spoken about Babylon, and Ezekiel 32:7–8, spoken about Egypt. Note how the prophets use sun, moon, and star language, and then read Mark 13:24–25 again in that light.
3. Write out 13:30 and 13:31 side by side. Explain how the first verse anchors the timing of what Jesus has just described and how the second one guards us against date-setting about anything else.
4. Set the woman of 14:3–9 beside Judas in 14:10–11. Both scenes involve money and both involve a decision about Jesus. Trace what each person gave, what each received, and how Jesus describes the outcome of each.
5. Jesus says of the woman, "She has done what she could." Identify the good thing you keep postponing because you cannot do it perfectly or completely, and do the portion you actually can do before this week ends.

If Christ Is Not Risen**WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE**

Paul goes back to the beginning with a church that had started losing its grip on the resurrection. He states the gospel in four short clauses, lists the eyewitnesses, including five hundred at once and finally himself, and then takes the denial seriously enough to follow it all the way down: if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen, and if Christ is not risen, then preaching, faith, forgiveness, and every Christian who has died are all lost. Then he turns and shows what the resurrection sets in motion.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul summarizes the gospel in 15:1–4 as died, buried, rose, and appeared, and adds in 15:2 that they are saved by it “if you hold fast.” Discuss both halves of that: what the gospel is, and what that conditional clause assumes is possible.
2. In 15:12–19 Paul works out what follows if there is no resurrection. Trace the consequences one by one as a class. Which of them would be the hardest to live with, and why does verse 19 call us the most pitiable of all men?
3. Read 15:24–26 slowly. Christ reigns until all enemies are under His feet, then the end comes, and He delivers the kingdom to the Father. Compare Acts 2:33–36 and Colossians 1:13, and discuss when that reign began and what it rules out about the future.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List every resurrection appearance Paul names in 15:5–8, in order. Note how many witnesses are involved and how many of them were still alive when he wrote, and explain why he mentions that detail.
2. Write out 15:2 and read it with Colossians 1:23 and Hebrews 3:12–14. Describe what all three passages assume about a person who does not continue in the faith.
3. Make a numbered list of everything Paul says would be true if Christ were not raised (15:13–19). Then write one sentence explaining how the whole argument hangs on a single historical event.
4. Set out the sequence of 15:22–26 in order: Christ the firstfruits, then those who are His at His coming, then the end. Read Daniel 2:44, Acts 2:33–36, and Colossians 1:13, and state when the kingdom began and who is reigning now.

5. First Corinthians 15:33 warns that evil company corrupts good habits, and verse 34 says to awake to righteousness. Name the specific influence that has been quietly lowering your standards, and make one concrete change to it this week.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: 2 Kings 18-25 · Psalm 38-39 · Mark 14:12-50 · 1 Corinthians 15:35-16:24

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