

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 51 OF 104

Gold and a Manger

Week 51 of 104 • 49% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	2 Chronicles 1-9
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 49-50
Gospels	Luke 1:67-2:21
General New Testament	2 Corinthians 8-9

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Begin the week in a room lined with gold. Solomon's temple was the most expensive building Israel would ever raise, and when the ark came in, the glory of God filled it until the priests could not stand up to do their work. Then Asaph hears that same God say He does not need a single bull out of your stall, because every animal in the forest already belongs to Him. Then Luke sets you down beside a feeding trough in a town too crowded to spare a room. And Paul writes about churches so poor that their poverty somehow overflowed into generosity, because the One who was rich became poor for them. God has never been impressed by what we can afford. He is after what we will hand over.

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 Chronicles 1-9

Solomon Builds the House

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Solomon begins at Gibeon, where God offers him anything and he asks for wisdom. Then the building starts: a contract with Hiram of Tyre, cedar rafted down the coast, the house rising on Mount Moriah, bronze pillars, and a molten sea. The ark is carried in, the cloud fills the house, Solomon prays one of the longest prayers in Scripture, and fire falls. God answers again by night with a promise and a warning. Then come the wealth, the fleet, and a queen who runs out of breath.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. God tells Solomon to ask for whatever he wants (1:7), and Solomon asks for wisdom and knowledge to lead God's people. If God made that offer to you tonight, what would you actually ask for, and what does your honest answer reveal about you?
2. Read 2 Chronicles 7:12-22 all the way through, not just verse 14. Who is being addressed, what covenant is in view, and what does that passage rightly teach a Christian today about humility, prayer, and repentance?

3. In his prayer Solomon makes room for the foreigner who comes from a far country because he has heard of God's name (6:32–33). What does that tell you about God's intentions from the beginning, and how welcoming is your congregation to the person who walks in knowing nobody?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Work through Solomon's prayer in 6:22–39 and list the situations he anticipates: sin against a neighbor, defeat, drought, famine, the foreigner, war, and captivity. What does each petition assume about how God deals with His people?
2. Compare 2 Chronicles 5:13–14 with Exodus 40:34–35. Then read 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 6:16. Where does God's glory dwell now, and how should that change the way you treat your own body and the church?
3. Trace the sources of Solomon's wealth in chapters 8 and 9, and then read Deuteronomy 17:16–17. What warning signs are already visible in this glowing account?
4. The queen of Sheba says the half was not told her (9:6). Read Matthew 12:42 and explain what Jesus claims about Himself using her as a witness.
5. Solomon gave his best craftsmen, his best materials, and seven years to this house. Name one area where you have been giving God your second best, and decide on one concrete change you will make this week.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 49–50

What Money Cannot Buy

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Psalm 49 is a teaching psalm addressed to everybody, rich and poor alike, and its subject is death. No amount of money can ransom a brother or keep a man alive forever; the wealthy and the fool go to the same grave, and only God can redeem a soul. Psalm 50 is Asaph's courtroom scene. God summons His people, tells them He has no complaint about their sacrifices but does not need them, calls for thanksgiving and truthfulness instead, and confronts those who recite His covenant while living against it.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 49:7–9 says no one can pay a ransom sufficient to redeem another person's life. Read Mark 10:45 and 1 Peter 1:18–19 alongside it, and talk about what it took to do what money could never do.
2. In Psalm 50:8–13 God says He will not take a bull from your house because every beast of the forest already belongs to Him. If God needs nothing from us, why does He ask anything of us at all?
3. Psalm 50:16–21 describes people who can quote God's statutes while running with thieves and slandering their own brothers, and God says they thought He was just like them. Where does that gap between what we say on Sunday and how we live on Thursday show up most easily in our own lives?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the things Psalm 49 says wealth cannot do. Then read Luke 12:16–21 and note how Jesus makes the same argument with a story.
2. Psalm 49:15 says God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me. Compare Job 19:25–27 and 1 Corinthians 15:54–57, and describe how much clearer the hope becomes on this side of the resurrection.
3. Psalm 50 is arranged like a trial. Trace it: who convenes the court, who is summoned, what the charge against the worshiper is in verses 7 through 15, and what the charge against the wicked is in verses 16 through 21.
4. Twice in Psalm 50 God asks for the sacrifice of thanksgiving (50:14, 23). Read Hebrews 13:15–16 and name what the corresponding offering looks like for a Christian.
5. Psalm 49:16–17 says not to be overawed when a man grows rich, because he will carry nothing away. Name one financial worry or one financial envy you have been carrying, and write out what you will do differently about it this week.

GOSPELS Luke 1:67–2:21

Good Tidings of Great Joy

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Zacharias finally speaks, and what comes out is prophecy: God has visited and redeemed His people, raised up a horn of salvation in David's house, and set this child to prepare the Lord's ways. Then a decree from Caesar

moves a carpenter and a pregnant woman eighty miles to Bethlehem, where there is no room. He is born and laid in a feeding trough. Shepherds on a night shift hear it first, from one angel and then from an army, and they go and tell.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Zacharias speaks of being saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us (1:71, 74). Read 1:77 and then Luke 24:46–47, and talk about what kind of salvation this child actually brings and how easy it is to want the wrong kind.
2. God announced the birth of His Son to shepherds working a night shift rather than to the temple leadership or to Herod's court. What is God saying by that choice, and who are the people in your town most likely to be overlooked in the same way?
3. Twice Luke says Mary kept these things and pondered them in her heart (2:19; see also 2:51). What would it take for you to build that kind of reflection into a week that is already full, and what usually crowds it out?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out everything Zacharias says God has done or will do in 1:68–79. How much of it is about rescue from enemies, and how much is about forgiveness and light?
2. Read Malachi 3:1 and Malachi 4:5–6 beside Luke 1:76–77. What office is John being given, and how does Luke 1:17 describe the work?
3. Micah 5:2 said the ruler would come from Bethlehem, and Luke 2:1–7 shows a Roman tax decree moving the right family to the right town at the right time. Trace how many ordinary events had to line up, and describe what that says about God's providence in your own ordinary week.
4. The angels announce peace on earth among men with whom God is pleased (2:14). Compare Romans 5:1 and Ephesians 2:13–17. What kind of peace is being promised, and what kind is not?
5. The shepherds did three things: they went with haste, they saw, and they made widely known what they had been told (2:15–18). Name the one person you will tell something true about Christ this week, and set the day.

The Grace of Giving

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul spends two full chapters on a collection for poor Christians in Jerusalem. He begins with the Macedonians, who were in deep poverty and severe affliction and yet begged for the privilege of giving, having first given themselves to the Lord. He urges Corinth to finish what they started a year earlier, points to the example of Christ who became poor, explains the careful safeguards he has put around the money, and closes with the principles of sowing, cheerfulness, and sufficiency.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Second Corinthians 8:5 says the Macedonians first gave themselves to the Lord. Why does that order matter so much, and what happens in a congregation when the order gets reversed?
2. Second Corinthians 9:7 says each one should give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity. Compare 1 Corinthians 16:1–2. How does the New Testament pattern of giving differ from a required percentage, and is it easier or harder on us?
3. Paul grounds the whole appeal in 8:9, that though Christ was rich, for our sakes He became poor. How should that one sentence shape what a Christian does with a raise, an inheritance, or an unexpected windfall?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the safeguards Paul builds around this money in 8:16–24. Why is it not enough to be honest; why does he insist on providing honorable things in the sight of men as well as of the Lord?
 2. Read 1 Corinthians 16:1–2 and note four things it specifies about the collection: when, who, how much, and how it is handled. Compare that with what you actually practice.
 3. Second Corinthians 8:12 says a gift is accepted according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. How does that protect the poorest member of a congregation from shame, and the wealthiest from self congratulation?
 4. Trace what Paul says the Corinthians' gift will accomplish in 9:11–14, beyond simply meeting a need. How many separate results can you find?
 5. Before next Sunday, decide on a specific amount you will purpose in your heart to give each week, write it down, and begin. If you already have one, raise it deliberately rather than accidentally.
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NEXT WEEK'S READING: 2 Chronicles 10-20 · Psalm 51-52 · Luke 2:22-52 · 2 Corinthians 10-11

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