

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 67 OF 104

Death Swallowed Up

Week 67 of 104 • 64% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Isaiah 18-26
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 79-80
Gospels	Luke 14
General New Testament	1 Thessalonians 2:17-4:18

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

There is a table set on a mountain this week, and there is a grave standing open beside it. Isaiah works his way through nine chapters of falling empires and then lifts his eyes to a feast of rich food and well-aged wine, where God destroys the veil spread over all nations, swallows up death forever, and wipes the tears off every face. Asaph stands in a ruined city with unburied bodies in the streets and can only say, restore us. Jesus sits at a dinner party and tells about a banquet where the invited guests all had something better to do, and then tells the crowds to count what following Him costs. And Paul, writing to people burying their first Christian dead, says the Lord Himself will come down with a shout and the dead in Christ will rise.

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 Isaiah 18-26

The Feast on the Mountain

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

These chapters march through the nations: Ethiopia, Egypt, Babylon, Edom, Arabia, Jerusalem itself, and Tyre. Isaiah walks barefoot for three years as a living sign. A watchman on a tower calls out in the night that Babylon has fallen. A palace official named Shebna is torn out of his position and another man is handed the key of the house of David. Then the horizon opens: the whole earth is shaken, and on a mountain God spreads a banquet, destroys the shroud over the nations, and swallows up death forever.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

- Isaiah 19:23-25 ends an oracle against Egypt with God calling Egypt "My people" and Assyria "the work of My hands." How does that change the way we read God's judgments on the nations, and where do you see it fulfilled?
- Isaiah 25:6-8 sets a feast on a mountain, destroys the covering over the nations, swallows up death, and wipes the tears off every face. Talk about what it means that God's answer to death is a meal.

3. Isaiah 26:3 promises perfect peace to the mind that is stayed on God. Discuss what “stayed” actually means, and what it would look like on a day when nothing is under your control.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the nations addressed in chapters 18 through 23, and beside each one write down what that nation was trusting in.
2. Isaiah 22:22 lays the key of the house of David on Eliakim’s shoulder. Read Revelation 3:7 and describe how John applies that image and to whom.
3. Isaiah 25:8 says God will swallow up death forever. Read 1 Corinthians 15:54–57 and note how Paul quotes it, what he adds to it, and when he says it happens.
4. Read Isaiah 26:19 and compare Daniel 12:2, John 5:28–29, and Acts 24:15. How much could Isaiah’s hearers have understood, and how much more do we now know?
5. Isaiah 22:12–13 describes people who responded to a call for repentance by eating and drinking, since tomorrow they die. Identify one place where you are numbing yourself instead of facing something, and do the harder thing this week.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 79–80

Restore Us, O God

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Psalm 79 opens in a city that has been sacked. The nations have come into God’s inheritance, defiled the temple, and left Jerusalem in heaps, with the bodies of God’s servants given to the birds and nobody left to bury the dead. It asks how long, and pleads for help for the sake of God’s name. Psalm 80 begs the Shepherd of Israel to shine out and save, three times repeating the same refrain, and tells of a vine brought out of Egypt whose hedges are now broken down.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 79:9 asks God to help “for the glory of Your name.” Why does the psalmist make God’s reputation his argument instead of his own need, and what would change if we prayed that way?

2. Psalm 79:6–12 asks God to pour out wrath and repay the nations sevenfold. How should Christians read and use a prayer like that, given Romans 12:19 and Revelation 6:9–10?
3. Psalm 80 repeats one request three times: restore us, cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved. What is actually being asked for, and what would restoration look like in this congregation rather than mere improvement?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List what Psalm 79:1–4 says has been lost or defiled. Then identify what troubles the psalmist beyond the physical damage.
2. Trace the vine imagery in Psalm 80:8–16 from planting to burning. Compare Isaiah 5:1–7 and John 15:1–8, and note what each passage does with the same picture.
3. The refrain of Psalm 80 appears in verses 3, 7, and 19. Write out all three and note how the name used for God changes each time.
4. Psalm 79:8 asks God not to remember former iniquities against them. Compare Psalm 103:10–14 and Hebrews 8:12, and describe how God deals with the sins of His people.
5. Name one thing in your life that needs restoring rather than improving, and ask God for it specifically, in those words, every day this week.

GOSPELS Luke 14

Seats, Excuses, and Cost

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus goes to a sabbath dinner at the house of a leading Pharisee, and Luke says they watched Him closely. He heals a man swollen with disease, then watches the guests choose the best seats and tells them to take the lowest. He tells the host to invite people who cannot pay him back. A guest says something pious about eating bread in the kingdom, and Jesus answers with a banquet full of excuses. Then He turns to the crowds and talks about unfinished towers, outnumbered armies, and a cross.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. In 14:7–11 Jesus watches dinner guests pick out the good seats. Where does that same instinct show up in a congregation, and what exactly is the alternative He gives?
2. The three excuses in 14:18–20 are a field, five yoke of oxen, and a new wife, all of them legitimate. Why do good things make the best excuses, and which of the three is yours?
3. Jesus deliberately slows people down and tells them to count the cost (14:28–33). Why would He do that with an eager crowd, and what do we tend to leave out when we invite someone to Christ?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List what Jesus tells the host about his guest list in 14:12–14, and write down the reason He gives at the end of verse 14.
2. Jesus says a disciple must hate father and mother and even his own life (14:26). Compare Matthew 10:37 and Genesis 29:30–31, then explain the idiom in your own words.
3. Trace the three responses in 14:18–20 and the two commands given to the servant in 14:21–23. Write down who ends up at the table and who does not.
4. Read 14:34–35 about salt that has lost its flavor. Compare Matthew 5:13, and describe what makes a disciple useless and whether anything can be done about it.
5. Jesus says to invite people who cannot repay you. Plan one specific act of hospitality this month for someone who can do nothing for you, and put it on the calendar today.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT 1 Thessalonians 2:17–4:18

The Dead in Christ

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Paul tells the Thessalonians how badly he wanted to come back to them, how Satan hindered him, and how he finally sent Timothy because he could not stand not knowing. Timothy's report nearly overwhelms him: now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. He prays that their love would overflow. Then he gives instructions about sexual purity, brotherly love, and honest work. And then, for people burying their first Christian dead, he describes the coming of the Lord and tells them to comfort one another with these words.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Paul calls these Christians his hope, his joy, and his crown of rejoicing at the coming of the Lord (2:19–20). What would have to be true of our relationships for any of us to say that about other people?
2. In 4:3–8 Paul is blunt about sexual purity, calls it the will of God and our sanctification, and adds that immorality defrauds a brother. How does he ground the command, and why does he make it a matter of how we treat other people?
3. 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 was written to people standing at gravesides. Walk through what Paul says will actually happen, and then talk about what Christian grief looks like that is genuinely different from grief without hope.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace Paul's prayer in 3:11–13. List each request, and note specifically what he asks for their love and for their hearts.
2. 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12 tells Christians to aspire to lead a quiet life, mind their own business, and work with their hands. Compare 2 Thessalonians 3:10–12 and Ephesians 4:28, and write down why Paul keeps returning to this.
3. List the events of 4:16–17 in the order Paul gives them. Then read John 5:28–29, 1 Corinthians 15:51–52, and 2 Peter 3:10–13, and write down how many comings and how many resurrections the New Testament describes.
4. Paul says not to sorrow as others who have no hope (4:13). Read 1 Corinthians 15:19–20 and describe what hope adds to a funeral without pretending that it removes the tears.
5. Name a grieving person you know. Go to them this week and say to them what verse 18 tells us to say to one another.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Isaiah 27–32 • Psalm 81–83 • Luke 15 • 1 Thessalonians 5

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