

Through the Bible in 24 Months, Teacher's Guide



WEEK 73 OF 104

The Lord Reigns

THIS WEEK'S READINGS	
General Old Testament	Isaiah 60-66
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 92-94
Gospels	Luke 19:28-20:8
General New Testament	2 Timothy 1-2

TEACHING AIM AND ORIENTATION

Your aim this week is to let the class see the throne and then see who sits on it. Isaiah closes his book with a God whose throne is heaven and whose footstool is the earth, and who nevertheless bends toward the man with a contrite spirit. Psalm 93 says flatly that the Lord reigns while the waters roar. Then Luke shows us what that reign looked like when it arrived in person: a King on a borrowed colt, weeping over the city that would not have Him, and answering a demand for credentials with a question nobody wanted to answer.

Doctrinally, three things need care. First, Isaiah 65 and 66 must be taught without a millennial framework; the new heavens and new earth are taken up by Peter and John and placed beyond this present order, and Christ reigns now. Second, Luke 19:43-44 describes the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, not the end of the world. Third, 2 Timothy 1:6 concerns an apostolic conferral that cannot be repeated, and 2 Timothy 2:11-13 must be read whole, since the same faithful saying that promises life with Christ also warns that He will deny those who deny Him.

The formational thread is what we do with what we have been handed. Timothy got his faith from a grandmother and a mother, and Paul tells him to pass it to faithful men who will teach others. The men in the temple courts had all the evidence they needed about John and about Jesus, and they used it to calculate rather than to obey. So ask your class this before they go: name the person you intend to hand your faith to, say when you last did anything deliberate about it, and name the day this month when you will.

SUGGESTED PLAN FOR THE TWO SESSIONS

First session: Take up Luke 19:28-20:8 first. It is narrative, it moves quickly, and it contains the two moments most classes have never really considered: Jesus weeping at the turn of the road, and the huddle in 20:5-6. Spend the last fifteen minutes on the question of authority, which is the whole week in miniature.

Second session: Take up Isaiah 60-66 second, and do not attempt all seven chapters. Build the hour on 61:1-3 with Luke 4:16-21, on 64:6-8, and on 66:1-2. Say clearly and briefly how the new heavens and new earth of 65:17 are used in 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21, and then move on.

The other two readings: Psalm 92-94 and 2 Timothy 1-2 carry the extended questions. Before the class scatters, read Psalm 92:12-15 aloud and name two or three older members who are visibly bearing fruit, so they hear it. Encourage every member to read 2 Timothy 2:2 and write one name in the margin.

New Heavens and New Earth**PASSAGE OVERVIEW**

The last seven chapters of Isaiah are a sustained vision of what God intends to make out of a ruined people. Chapter 60 opens with a command, “Arise, shine; for your light has come,” and describes a darkness covering the earth while the glory of the Lord rises on Zion, drawing the nations toward the light. The building materials of the old temple show up again as gifts brought by foreigners. The city has walls called Salvation and gates called Praise, and God Himself is its everlasting light.

Chapter 61 is the chapter Jesus claimed. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives. In Nazareth He read to the middle of verse 2, closed the book, sat down, and said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” He stopped before the words “and the day of vengeance of our God,” because that day had not come yet, and it is still coming. Chapters 62 through 64 alternate between promise and confession, with one of the most honest prayers in Scripture: we are all like an unclean thing, our righteousnesses are like filthy rags, and yet, O Lord, You are our Father, we are the clay and You our Potter.

Chapters 65 and 66 close the book with new heavens and a new earth, a God found by people who were not looking for Him, and a final separation between those who tremble at His word and those who do not. Teach this section as poetry of the age to come, and resist the pull to turn it into a timetable. Peter takes up the same phrase, new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, and puts it after the dissolution of this present order, not before it. Isaiah’s last verse is quoted by Jesus in Mark 9:48 of eternal punishment. This is not a political program; it is the end of the story.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Isaiah wrote in the eighth century before Christ; these closing chapters look past the exile to the full restoration God intends in the Messiah.
- Isaiah 61:1–2 is quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:18–19 and applied directly to Himself.
- The language of nations streaming to Zion is fulfilled in the church, where Gentiles are made fellow heirs (Ephesians 2:11–22; Acts 15:14–18, which quotes Amos 9:11–12 to settle the same question).
- Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22, “new heavens and a new earth,” are taken up in 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1 and placed after the passing of this present order.
- Isaiah 66:24, the last verse of the book, is quoted by Jesus in Mark 9:47–48 concerning eternal punishment.
- The genre throughout is prophetic poetry using the imagery available to its first hearers: temples, offerings, walls, and harvests. Read the pictures for what they promise rather than as architectural plans.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Jesus read Isaiah 61:1–2 aloud in the synagogue at Nazareth and stopped in the middle of a sentence (Luke 4:16–21). Compare what He read with what Isaiah wrote, and discuss why the place He stopped matters so much.*

Isaiah 61:2 reads, “to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.” Jesus read the first clause and stopped. Luke says He closed the book, gave it back, and sat down with every eye fastened on Him, and then said the Scripture was fulfilled that day. The stopping point is the dividing line between His first coming and His second. He came the first time proclaiming an acceptable year; He comes again in flaming fire (2 Thessalonians 1:7–10).

Two things follow for the class. First, we are living inside the acceptable year right now, which is precisely why 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, "Now is the day of salvation." Second, the day of vengeance in the same sentence is not canceled; it is simply not yet. A generation that hears only the first half of the verse will not understand why anyone should hurry. Ask the class how they would explain both halves of that sentence to a friend who believes God is too loving to judge anyone.

Question 2. *Isaiah 64:6 says our righteous acts are like filthy rags, and 64:8 says we are clay and God is the Potter. How do those two pictures work together, and what does each one protect us from believing about ourselves?*

The two pictures answer two different errors. Filthy rags demolishes the idea that we can assemble enough personal righteousness to stand before God on our own merit; the confession in 64:6 is made by God's own people about their best efforts, not by pagans about their worst. Clay in the Potter's hand demolishes despair, because clay is not garbage. It is raw material in the hands of someone who knows what he is making.

Guard the class from turning the first picture into total depravity. Isaiah is not saying that human beings are incapable of any good or that infants are born guilty; he is saying that self-generated righteousness cannot purchase standing with God. And guard them from turning the second into fatalism. The Potter shapes willing clay; the very next verses ask God to look and see, and the chapter is a prayer. Ask what each picture protects them from, and which one they personally need more often.

Question 3. *Isaiah 66:2 says God looks to the man who is poor and of a contrite spirit and who trembles at His word. Describe what trembling at God's word looks like in practice for a person who has been hearing it since childhood.*

Trembling at God's word is not nervousness; it is taking what He says with total seriousness. It looks like reading a passage that contradicts something you have always done and changing what you do rather than looking for an interpretation that lets you keep it. It looks like being unwilling to settle an argument with "well, I feel like." It looks like a man who hears a sermon aimed at his own sin and does not immediately think of who else needed to hear it.

The danger for lifelong members is familiarity, which is why God pairs poverty of spirit with trembling. A person who has heard the Bible for fifty years can quote it fluently and feel nothing. Ask the class when they were last genuinely shaken by something they read, and whether they can name a single practice they have changed in the last two years because of a passage. Then ask what a Bible reading that expects to be corrected would look like tomorrow morning.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *List everything Isaiah 65:17–25 says about the new heavens and the new earth. Then read 2 Peter 3:10–13 and Revelation 21:1–5 and write down what the New Testament adds and what it clarifies.*

Isaiah says God creates new heavens and a new earth, the former things are not remembered, He creates Jerusalem a rejoicing, weeping is heard no more, infants no longer die, houses are built and inhabited by the ones who build them, the elect enjoy the work of their hands, they shall not labor in vain, they are blessed of the Lord, God answers before they call, and the wolf and the lamb feed together. Second Peter 3 places the new heavens and new earth after the dissolution of the present order, and says righteousness dwells there. Revelation 21 adds that God dwells with His people, wipes away every tear, and that there is no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. The New Testament lifts the picture out of this world entirely.

2. *Read Isaiah 61:1–3 and write out each thing the Anointed One is sent to do. Which of them do you most need this month, and which one could you help deliver to someone else?*

He is sent to preach good tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to open the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort all who mourn, and to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Answers about personal need will vary; the second half of the question is the useful one, since every item on that list is something Christians are able to carry to someone else this week.

3. *Isaiah 63:1–6 pictures someone coming from Edom in stained garments, having trodden the winepress alone.*

Compare Revelation 19:11–16. What are both passages saying about who finally deals with evil?

Both passages picture Christ executing judgment, and both insist He does it alone. Isaiah says He looked and there was no one to help, so His own arm brought salvation. Revelation describes the rider on the white horse, called Faithful and True, whose robe is dipped in blood and who treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. The point in both is that final justice is God's own work, not ours, which is exactly why Romans 12:19 tells us to give place to wrath and leave vengeance to Him.

4. *Trace every reference to the nations and the Gentiles in Isaiah 60, 62, and 66. Then read Acts 15:14–18 and Ephesians 2:11–22, and describe where those promises are actually being fulfilled.*

Isaiah says the Gentiles shall come to Zion's light and kings to the brightness of her rising, that foreigners shall build her walls, that the Gentiles shall see her righteousness, and that God will gather all nations and tongues and even take some of them for priests and Levites. Acts 15:14–18 says God visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name, and James cites prophecy to settle it. Ephesians 2:11–22 says the middle wall of separation is broken down and both are built together into a holy temple. The promises are being fulfilled now, in the church, not in a political restoration.

5. *Isaiah 65:24 says that before they call, God will answer. Name one thing you have never asked God for because you assumed He was not interested in it, and ask Him this week.*

Answers will vary. Common answers involve things people consider too small (a job interview, a sleep problem, a strained friendship) or too large (a prodigal child, a disease). Isaiah 65:24 addresses both directions: God is already answering before the request is finished. Watch for the person who has stopped praying about something because he decided the answer in advance.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Isaiah 65:17–25 must be taught without a millennial framework. The imagery is the poetry of an ideal age given to people who knew houses, vineyards, and infant mortality; the New Testament takes the same phrase and places it beyond this present order (2 Peter 3:10–13; Revelation 21:1–5).
- Isaiah 65:20, with its mention of a child dying at a hundred years, is exactly the kind of verse used to construct an earthly thousand-year reign. Teach it as a picture of an age without premature death, and point out that Christ reigns now and delivers the kingdom to the Father at the end (1 Corinthians 15:24–25).
- The temple, offering, and priesthood language of 66:20–21 is fulfilled in gospel worship and in the priesthood of all Christians (Romans 15:16; 1 Peter 2:5, 9). It is not a prediction of a rebuilt temple with restored animal sacrifice, which Hebrews 10:1–18 forbids.
- Isaiah 66:24 is used by Jesus of eternal punishment. Teach it soberly, without embellishment, and without making the hour about the details of hell.

The Lord Reigns Forever

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

These three psalms belong together as a small course in the reign of God. Psalm 92 begins with thanksgiving and then poses the problem every believer eventually faces: the wicked spring up like grass and all the workers of iniquity flourish. The answer is in the same sentence. They flourish “that they may be destroyed forever.” Grass is impressive for about a week. Meanwhile the righteous are planted in the house of the Lord, flourishing like a palm tree, growing like a cedar, and still bearing fruit in old age, fat and flourishing, declaring that the Lord is upright.

Psalm 93 is short and magnificent. The Lord reigns; He is clothed with majesty and girded with strength. The world is established and cannot be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting. Then the poem turns to the sea, which for ancient people was the picture of chaos: the floods have lifted up their voice, the floods lift up their waves. And the answer is that the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters. The psalm ends with holiness becoming God’s house forever, which ties His rule to His character.

Psalm 94 is where those two truths meet real life. If the Lord reigns, then why do the wicked triumph, break His people in pieces, slay the widow and the stranger, and say that God does not see? The psalmist answers with a devastating argument from creation: He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? Then the psalm turns personal. When my foot slipped, Your mercy held me up; in the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul. That verse has carried a great many Christians through a great many nights.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Psalm 92 is the only psalm titled for the Sabbath day; the Sabbath belonged to the covenant God made with Israel at Sinai (Exodus 31:16–17; Deuteronomy 5:15).
- Psalm 93 is an enthronement psalm, one of a group in Book IV (95 through 99) that answers the crisis of Psalm 89 by turning attention from David’s fallen throne to God’s permanent one.
- The raging sea in 93:3–4 is standard ancient imagery for chaos and hostile power; the psalm says God is above it.
- Psalm 94 is a communal lament with imprecatory elements, appealing to God as the God to whom vengeance belongs (compare Romans 12:19, which quotes the same principle).
- Palm and cedar in 92:12 are both long-lived trees with deep roots, in contrast to grass that appears quickly and dies quickly.
- Christians assemble on the first day of the week following the apostolic pattern (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). The Lord’s Day is not a Christian Sabbath, and the old covenant Sabbath law was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14–17).

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Psalm 92:12–15 promises that the righteous will still bear fruit in old age and stay fresh and flourishing. What does fruitfulness look like in a seventy-five-year-old Christian, and who in this congregation is a living example of it?*

Psalm 92 says the righteous are planted in the house of the Lord, and that is where the fruit in old age comes from. Fruitfulness at seventy-five rarely looks like activity; it looks like influence. It is the widow whose prayer list includes every young family in the congregation. It is the older man whose counsel is sought because he has been steady for fifty years. It is the grandmother who taught three generations of children and can still name them. Verse 15 gives the fruit itself: “to declare that the Lord is upright.”

Ask for names out loud, and let the older members in the room hear themselves named. Many faithful older Christians quietly believe they have become useless to the congregation when they can no longer do the visible work, and this psalm says the opposite. Then ask the younger members a follow-up: which older member have you actually gone to for counsel in the last year, and if the answer is none, what does that say about how this congregation uses what God has planted in it?

Question 2. *Psalm 93 says the Lord reigns and that His throne is established of old, and in the same breath it describes floods lifting up their voice. How should the fact of God's present reign change the way you handle news that alarms you?*

Psalm 93 does not deny the floods. It says they lift up their voice, they lift up their waves, they roar, and then it says the Lord on high is mightier. The reign of God is not an alternative to the storm; it is the fact that stands over the storm. Note also that His throne is "established of old," which means nothing in today's news is new to Him and nothing has recently threatened His position.

Bring it to the practice of a Christian's week. Alarming news now arrives continuously and is engineered to keep us watching. Ask the class what their news intake does to their prayer life, their sleep, and their conversation, and then ask what would change if they read Psalm 93 before opening their phone in the morning. The goal is not indifference to real trouble; it is a settled confidence that keeps a person useful rather than frantic.

Question 3. *Psalm 94:12 says blessed is the man whom God chastens and teaches out of His law. Why is that called a blessing, and how do you tell the difference between God's discipline and ordinary trouble?*

It is a blessing because the alternative is being left alone. Hebrews 12:5–11 makes the same argument at length: God deals with us as with sons, and if we are without chastening then we are not sons at all. Psalm 94:12 ties chastening to teaching out of God's law, which is the key. The blessing is not the pain; it is the instruction that comes with it, and that is why the psalm pairs the rod with the book.

On telling the difference, be careful and humble. Scripture does not authorize us to read every hardship as a specific verdict; Job's friends did that and were rebuked, and Jesus explicitly refused that logic in John 9:1–3 and Luke 13:1–5. What we can say is this: when trouble comes, ask what God would teach through it rather than what God is punishing with it. Ask the class to name a hard season that taught them something they could not have learned any other way.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *Psalm 92 carries the title "A Song for the Sabbath Day." Read Colossians 2:16–17, Romans 14:5–6, and Acts 20:7, and explain how Christians relate to the Sabbath and to the first day of the week.*

The Sabbath was given to Israel as a sign of the covenant made at Sinai and is never bound on Gentile Christians. Colossians 2:16–17 says to let no one judge you regarding a sabbath, which was a shadow of things to come, the substance being Christ. Romans 14:5–6 allows a Christian to esteem one day above another as a matter of personal conviction, without binding it on others. Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2 show the disciples assembling on the first day of the week to break bread and to give. The first day is not a transferred Sabbath; it is the day the Lord rose and the day His people gather.

2. *List the arguments Psalm 94:8–11 makes against the notion that God does not notice. Notice how the psalmist reasons from creation to conclusion, and write the argument out in your own words.*

The psalmist argues from the Maker to the thing made: He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see? He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct? He who teaches man knowledge, shall He not know? The logic is unanswerable. A God capable of designing hearing cannot be deaf, and a God who gave humanity the capacity to know cannot be ignorant. Verse 11 adds the conclusion: the Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

3. Compare Psalm 92:7 with Psalm 73:16–19. What do the two psalms agree on regarding the prosperity of the wicked, and where does each one say the writer figured it out?

Both agree that the prosperity of the wicked is temporary and that their end is sudden ruin. Psalm 92:6–7 says a senseless man does not understand this, and that the wicked spring up like grass in order to be destroyed forever. Psalm 73:16–17 says the writer could not make sense of it, and it was too painful for him, until he went into the sanctuary of God, and then he understood their end. Both psalms locate the resolution in God's presence rather than in better reasoning.

4. Trace the tree imagery in Psalm 92:7, 12, and 14. Grass, palm, and cedar are all growing things. What exactly is being contrasted, and what is the difference between them?

Verse 7 compares the wicked to grass: fast, abundant, shallow, and short-lived. Verse 12 compares the righteous to the palm and the cedar: slow, deep-rooted, long-lived, and useful. Verse 14 adds that they still bear fruit in old age. The contrast is not between growth and no growth; both grow. It is between speed and depth, and between a life that peaks early and a life that is still producing when it is old.

5. Psalm 94:19 says that in the multitude of anxieties within, God's comforts delight the soul. Name the anxiety that multiplies at two in the morning, and write down the specific comfort of God you will answer it with this week.

Answers will vary. The verse is precise: the anxieties are "within me," and they are a multitude, which is exactly how two in the morning works. Encourage a specific, written comfort rather than a general reassurance, something that can be said out loud: a promise of God, a verse, a remembered deliverance. Philippians 4:6–7 and 1 Peter 5:7 belong in the same margin.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Psalm 92's Sabbath title will raise the Sabbath question. Teach clearly that the Sabbath law belonged to the old covenant and is not binding on Christians, and that the Lord's Day is not a Christian Sabbath.
- Psalm 94 calls God the God of vengeance and asks Him to render punishment. Handle it as an appeal to God's justice, consistent with Romans 12:19 and Revelation 6:10, not as a license for personal retaliation.
- Psalm 94:14, "the Lord will not cast off His people," speaks of God's faithfulness to His covenant people, not of a guarantee that an individual cannot fall away (Hebrews 3:12–14; Galatians 5:4).
- Do not let the discussion of chastening slide into reading specific misfortunes as specific punishments. Jesus rejected that reasoning in Luke 13:1–5 and John 9:1–3.

By What Authority

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

For three years Jesus has told people to keep quiet about Him. Now He does the opposite. He sends for a colt, fulfills a specific prophecy in front of a Passover crowd, accepts open acclamation as King, and refuses to silence it. When the Pharisees object, He says that if these should keep silent the stones would immediately cry out. Everything from this point forward is deliberate. He is presenting Himself as Israel's King in the week He intends to die.

Then Luke gives us something the other Gospels do not. At the turn of the road where the whole city comes into view, Jesus stops and weeps. Not a tear; the word suggests audible grief. "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace, but now they are hidden from your eyes." He then describes the siege in detail: an embankment, encirclement, children dashed to the ground, not one stone left upon another. The reason is stated plainly: "because you did not know the time of your visitation." God came to town and the town did not recognize Him.

The cleansing of the temple follows immediately, and so does the confrontation. The chief priests, scribes, and elders demand to know His authority, which is the question the whole week is about. His counter-question about John's baptism is not evasion; it is a diagnosis. Their huddle gives them away. They do not ask what is true; they calculate which answer creates the least trouble. When they answer that they do not know, Jesus declines to tell them, because a man who will not follow evidence he already has will not be helped by more of it.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- This is the beginning of the final week, with Passover approaching and Jerusalem swollen with pilgrims.
- Zechariah 9:9 had specified a king coming to Zion lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey; riding an unbroken animal without incident is itself notable.
- The crowd's words in 19:38 come from Psalm 118:26, part of the Hallel sung at the feasts, so they were shouting Scripture they had sung all their lives.
- The prediction of 19:43–44 was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when Roman armies under Titus besieged and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, roughly forty years later.
- The temple merchants operated in the Court of the Gentiles, the only place a non-Jew could pray, which is why Jesus quotes "a house of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:7; Mark 11:17).
- The demand for credentials in 20:1–2 comes from the Sanhedrin's leadership, who had authority to examine a teacher, and who had already decided to destroy Him (19:47).

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Jesus arranged every detail of this entry, down to the unbroken colt. Read Zechariah 9:9 beside Luke 19:28–38. What is He deliberately claiming, and why claim it on a colt rather than on a warhorse?*

He is claiming to be the King promised in Zechariah 9:9, and He is doing it in a way that cannot be mistaken. The crowd understood; they quoted the coronation language of Psalm 118 and spread their garments in the road, which was what people did for a king. The choice of a donkey's colt rather than a horse is part of the claim, not a softening of it. Zechariah's next verse says this King will cut off the chariot and the battle bow and speak peace to the nations.

The class needs to see both halves. Jesus is King, and His kingship is not the kind Rome or the Zealots would have recognized. He does not seize the city; He weeps over it, cleanses the temple, teaches daily, and dies on Friday.

Ask the class where they still expect the kingdom of Christ to advance by force, leverage, or political victory, and what a colt-shaped kingdom looks like in a congregation.

Question 2. *Luke says Jesus wept over the city because it did not know the time of its visitation (19:41–44). Why would the Son of God cry over a city that was about to kill Him, and where might that same sentence apply to people like us?*

Because He loved them, and because He could see exactly what was coming. Luke has Him describe the siege in specific terms, which is the grief of someone watching a preventable disaster. Note that the tears are not for Himself, though He knows what Friday holds; they are for people who are about to reject their only hope and live with the consequences. This is the heart of God toward those who will not come, and it should settle forever any picture of a God who is indifferent to the lost.

The phrase “the time of your visitation” is the one to press. God came near, and they did not recognize the moment. That can happen to a congregation, a family, or a person. It happens when a season of unusual openness passes unused, when a preacher’s plain sermon is admired and not obeyed, when a crisis that softened a heart hardens again. Ask the class: is there a visitation going on in your life right now that you are treating as ordinary?

Question 3. *The chief priests asked by what authority He was doing these things, and Jesus answered with a question about John’s baptism (20:1–8). What did their private huddle reveal about how they made decisions, and when are we tempted to decide the same way?*

Their reasoning is preserved word for word, and it is entirely about consequences. If we say from heaven, He will ask why we did not believe John. If we say from men, the people will stone us. So they answered that they did not know. The one question never raised in that huddle is the only one that mattered: was John’s baptism from heaven or not? Truth never entered the deliberation.

We do the same whenever a question is settled by cost rather than by Scripture. It happens when a family decides about a practice based on what relatives will say, when a congregation avoids a needed correction because of who might leave, when a man will not study a subject honestly because of what he would have to change. Ask the class to name a decision they are facing and to separate the two questions on paper: what is true, and what will it cost. Jesus refused to give more evidence to men who had already decided not to follow it, and that is a sober warning.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *Set Luke 19:29–38 beside Zechariah 9:9 and Psalm 118:25–26. List every detail that matches, and note what the crowd was actually quoting when they shouted.*

Matching details include a king coming to Zion, riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey, arriving lowly rather than in military triumph, and a rejoicing crowd. The crowd was quoting Psalm 118:26, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” which belonged to the Hallel sung at the great feasts, and Luke records them adding the word “King.” They were singing a Scripture they had known from childhood and applying it, at last, correctly.

2. *Trace exactly what Jesus says will happen to Jerusalem in 19:43–44. Then read Luke 21:20–24 and find out from a reference work when those words came true.*

He says enemies will build an embankment around her, surround her, close her in on every side, level her to the ground with her children within her, and not leave one stone upon another. Luke 21:20–24 adds that when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies, its desolation is near, and tells the disciples in the city to flee to the mountains. History records the fulfillment in A.D. 70, when Roman legions under Titus besieged the city, destroyed the temple, and ended the Jewish state, about forty years after Jesus spoke.

3. *Jesus drove out the sellers and quoted Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. Look up both passages in their own contexts. What was actually wrong with what was happening in the temple courts?*

Isaiah 56:7 says God’s house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations, in a context about foreigners and eunuchs being welcomed. Jeremiah 7:11 asks whether God’s house has become a den of robbers, in a sermon condemning people who steal, murder, and commit adultery and then stand in the temple saying they are delivered. Put together, the sin was twofold. The commerce had taken over the only court where Gentiles could pray, shutting

out the very people Isaiah said were welcome, and the trade itself had become exploitation conducted under a religious roof.

4. *In 20:5–6 the leaders reason among themselves about which answer will cost them the least. Write out their reasoning in full. Then identify the one question they never asked.*

Their reasoning runs: if we say from heaven, He will say, why then did you not believe him? But if we say from men, all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet. Every step weighs consequences. The question never asked is simply whether John's baptism was in fact from heaven. Men who will not ask that question about John will not ask it about Jesus, which is why He refused to answer them.

5. *A crowd shouted "Blessed is the King" on Sunday, and by Friday the same city was silent or worse. Name the setting where your confession of Christ is loudest and the setting where it is quietest, and decide what you will do about the second one this month.*

Answers will vary. Most people find their confession loudest where it costs least, usually among Christians, and quietest where it costs most, usually at work, among extended family, or with old friends. Press for one concrete step: a question answered honestly instead of deflected, an invitation extended, a Bible visible on a desk, a stated reason for a decision. Note that the crowd's Sunday shouting was real, and that real enthusiasm is not the same thing as courage on Friday.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- The entry is a deliberate messianic claim, not a spontaneous parade. Do not let it be reduced to a nice scene with palm branches.
- Luke 19:43–44 and 21:20–24 describe the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, not the end of the world. Keeping that straight prevents a great deal of confusion later in the Gospels.
- The cleansing of the temple is not a general warrant for anger in defense of a cause. It is the Lord acting with authority in His own house, and He is about to be silent before Pilate.
- The crowd's hope was largely political, and within days it collapsed. Use that honestly without saying more than the text does about who shouted on Sunday and who shouted on Friday.

Guard the Good Deposit

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Second Timothy reads differently from the first letter because Paul is writing at the end. He is in a Roman prison, he says everyone in Asia has turned away from him, and by chapter 4 he will say that the time of his departure is at hand. Everything in these two chapters is the transfer of a trust from a dying man to a younger one. That is why the language is about deposits and patterns and things committed.

The great personal verse is 1:12: “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.” Paul’s confidence is not in his circumstances, his record, or his safety. It is in a person. Out of that confidence come the charges: do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, hold fast the pattern of sound words, and guard the good thing committed to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

Chapter 2 turns the trust outward. Commit what you have heard from me among many witnesses to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. That is the plan for keeping the gospel in the world, and it has no shortcuts in it: reliable people, taught carefully, who teach reliable people. Paul then supplies the temperament required. A soldier does not entangle himself with civilian affairs. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes by the rules. A hardworking farmer is the first to partake of the crops. And the workman is not ashamed because he handles the word of truth accurately, which is the opposite of the profane babbling that has already overturned the faith of some.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Paul writes from a second Roman imprisonment, probably around A.D. 66 or 67, expecting execution (4:6-8).
- Timothy’s mother Eunice and grandmother Lois had taught him the Holy Scriptures from childhood (1:5; 3:15), though his father was Greek (Acts 16:1).
- The gift imparted “through the laying on of my hands” (1:6) was an apostolic conferral of a miraculous gift (compare Acts 8:18; Romans 1:11), which no one today can duplicate because there are no living apostles.
- “Rightly dividing” translates a word meaning to cut straight, as a workman cuts a line accurately; it has nothing to do with dividing Scripture into dispensations.
- Hymenaeus and Philetus were teaching a spiritualized resurrection already past, an early form of the error Paul answers at length in 1 Corinthians 15.
- The imagery of soldier, athlete, and farmer was common to Greco-Roman moral instruction; Paul fills the familiar pictures with the demands of discipleship.

NOTES ON THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Paul says he remembers the genuine faith that lived first in Lois and then in Eunice and now in Timothy (1:5). Talk about who handed you what you have, and about who is watching you right now the way Timothy watched them.*

Paul’s memory is specific. He names two women, a grandmother and a mother, and says the faith dwelt in them first. Timothy’s father was a Greek who is never described as a believer, so what Timothy received came through the household of his mother and from the Scriptures he knew from infancy. That is how most faith travels: not through programs but through a household where it is obviously real.

The second half of the question is the one that matters. Every adult in the room is being watched by someone: a child, a grandchild, a young couple, a new convert, a coworker. Ask each person to name one specific individual

who would learn his faith by watching him, and ask what that person has seen in the last month. Note also that this cuts both ways; a class member with an unbelieving family can be a Lois to someone he is not related to.

Question 2. *Second Timothy 2:2 puts four generations in a single verse: Paul, Timothy, faithful men, and others also. Where is that chain strongest in this congregation, and where is the next link in danger of not being formed?*

The chain in 2:2 has four links, and each requires the one before it. Paul taught Timothy publicly, among many witnesses, so the content is verifiable rather than private. Timothy is to hand that same content, not an improved version, to men who are faithful, meaning both reliable and believing. And those men are chosen specifically for their ability to teach others, so the criterion is not who is available but who will pass it on.

In a congregation the chain usually breaks in one particular place: the generation currently in its twenties and thirties, who are being taught but not trained, and who are rarely handed responsibility until someone drops out and they are drafted. Ask concretely: who in this congregation is deliberately being prepared to teach, and who is doing the preparing? If the answer is nobody, the class has just identified the most important work the congregation is not doing.

Question 3. *Paul tells Timothy to be a workman rightly dividing the word of truth (2:15). What goes wrong in a congregation where the Scriptures are handled carelessly, and what does careful handling actually require of an ordinary member?*

The picture is of a workman cutting straight. Where the word is handled carelessly, several things go wrong at once. Verses get used without their contexts, and people build convictions on phrases. Difficult passages get avoided, so the congregation has no answers when they are challenged. Opinion gets preached with the authority of Scripture, and Scripture gets softened to the authority of opinion. Paul names the result in 2:18: the faith of some is overthrown.

For an ordinary member, careful handling requires reading a passage in its own setting, noticing who is speaking and to whom, letting clear passages govern unclear ones, distinguishing what a text says from what we wish it said, and being willing to say “I do not know yet, let me study it.” Ask the class what their own study habits actually are, and whether anyone has ever changed his mind about anything because of a text. A congregation full of people who read carefully is very hard to lead astray.

NOTES ON THE EXTENDED QUESTIONS

1. *List the three pictures Paul uses for a servant of Christ in 2:3–6, the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer, and write down what each one contributes that the other two do not.*

The soldier contributes singleness of purpose: he endures hardship and does not entangle himself with the affairs of this life, because he exists to please the one who enlisted him. The athlete contributes obedience to the rules: he is not crowned unless he competes lawfully, so zeal without submission to God’s terms wins nothing. The farmer contributes patient labor: he works hard and waits through a season before anything comes up, and he is the first to partake of the crops. Together they describe a life that is focused, lawful, and patient.

2. *Second Timothy 1:12 says, “I know whom I have believed.” Read the whole verse carefully and identify the two things Paul is confident about. Compare Romans 8:38–39 and 1 Peter 1:3–5.*

Paul is confident, first, about a person: “I know whom I have believed,” not merely what he has believed. Second, he is persuaded that God is able to keep what Paul has committed to Him until that Day. His confidence rests on God’s ability, not on his own endurance, and it has a deadline in view, the day of judgment. Romans 8 says nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, and 1 Peter 1 says we are kept by the power of God through faith. Note the phrase “through faith,” which is why this is not a doctrine of unconditional security.

3. *Hymenaeus and Philetus taught that the resurrection was already past (2:17–18). Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–22 and explain why that particular error overthrows the faith of those who accept it.*

First Corinthians 15 shows that the resurrection of Christians and the resurrection of Christ stand or fall together. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen, preaching is empty, faith is futile, the apostles are false witnesses, and those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. To say the resurrection is already past, in some

spiritualized sense, is to tell grieving Christians that what they are waiting for will never come and that their dead are gone. It empties the gospel of its hope, which is exactly why Paul says such teaching spreads like gangrene.

4. *Trace the faithful saying in 2:11–13 line by line. Write out each clause, and mark which ones are promises and which are warnings. Where does the last line fit?*

The lines are: if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. The first two are promises, the third is a warning, and the fourth is often misread as comfort for the unfaithful. In context it is the ground of the whole saying: God remains true to His own character and word whether we are faithful or not, which means His promises hold and His warnings hold. It is not a promise that denial carries no consequence; verse 12 has just said the opposite.

5. *Paul says the Lord's servant must not quarrel but be gentle, able to teach, patient, correcting opponents in humility (2:24–26). Name the conversation you keep having badly, and write down one sentence you will open with next time.*

Answers will vary. Watch for the person who names a conversation with a spouse, an adult child, or a fellow member that has calcified into a script. The passage requires gentleness, patience, and humility, and it locates the goal in verse 25: that God may perhaps grant them repentance. Encourage an actual opening sentence written out, since most of these conversations are lost in the first thirty seconds.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- The gift given through Paul's hands in 1:6 was an apostolic conferral. No one today can pass on miraculous gifts, since no apostles remain and the confirming signs served to confirm the word (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3–4; 1 Corinthians 13:8–10). Teach this plainly and without sarcasm.
- "Rightly dividing the word of truth" means handling Scripture accurately. It is not a reference to dividing the Bible into dispensations, and it should not be used that way.
- Second Timothy 2:13 is not a promise of security for the unfaithful. Read it with verse 12: if we deny Him, He will deny us. God's faithfulness to His own word includes His warnings.
- Second Timothy 2:19, "The Lord knows those who are His," is followed immediately by "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Keep the two halves together so the verse is not used to support unconditional election.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Jeremiah 1–5 · Psalm 95–97 · Luke 20:9–47 · 2 Timothy 3–4

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