

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 78 OF 104

The Word Like Fire

Week 78 of 104 • 75% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Jeremiah 23-27
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 105
Gospels	Luke 23:1-43
General New Testament	Hebrews 4:1-6:12

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

God asks a question in Jeremiah that ought to be printed inside every Bible cover: what is the chaff to the wheat? He has just finished describing prophets who preach their own dreams and promise that nothing bad will happen, and He says His own word is like fire, and like a hammer that shatters rock. That is the thread this week. A psalm walks through Israel's history and points out that the word of the Lord tested Joseph in a dungeon before it lifted him to a palace. Hebrews says the word is living, sharper than any sword, and able to divide a man from his own excuses. And Luke takes you to a hill where a dying criminal hears seven words from a dying King and everything changes.

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 Jeremiah 23-27

Chaff, Wheat, and a Hammer

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

God pronounces woe on shepherds who scatter His flock, then promises a righteous Branch from David who will be called the Lord Our Righteousness. From there He turns on the prophets: men who never stood in His counsel, who steal words from one another, who tell their own dreams and assure everyone that no harm is coming. Jeremiah sees two baskets of figs, announces seventy years of Babylonian rule, stands trial for the temple sermon, and wears a wooden yoke through the streets to tell the nations to submit.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jeremiah 23:16-22 describes prophets who promise that no evil will come, and God says if they had stood in His counsel they would have turned people from their evil ways. Discuss the test that gives us for any message, including the ones we enjoy hearing.

2. God promises a righteous Branch from David whose name will be called the Lord Our Righteousness (23:5–6). Trace how the New Testament says that promise came true, and what it means for a person to wear a righteousness that is not his own.
3. God tells His people through Jeremiah to accept seventy years under a pagan empire and even to submit to Nebuchadnezzar's yoke. How do faithful people live under a government and a culture they did not choose and cannot fix?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the charges God brings against the shepherds in Jeremiah 23:1–4, and then list what He says He will do about His scattered flock.
2. Read the vision of the two baskets in Jeremiah 24. Write down what God says about each basket, and note carefully the promise in verse 7.
3. Jeremiah 23:29 compares God's word to fire and to a hammer that breaks rock. Read Hebrews 4:12 and Acts 2:37 alongside it. What do these passages say the word does to a person who actually hears it?
4. Read the trial in Jeremiah 26. Who defended Jeremiah, what precedent did they cite, and what happened to the prophet Urijah in the same chapter?
5. Name one area where you have been choosing chaff over wheat: a teacher, a podcast, a friend, or a habit of reading that tells you what you want to hear. What will you replace it with this month?

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 105

He Remembered His Promise

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

This psalm tells Israel's story as one long act of God keeping His word. It begins by calling the singer to give thanks, seek the Lord, and remember His marvelous works. Then it walks through the covenant with Abraham, the wandering years when the family was small and few, Joseph sold as a slave and laid in irons until the word of the Lord tested him, Egypt, the plagues one after another, the exodus with silver and gold, the cloud and the fire, and finally the land.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 105 is built on the command to remember (105:5). Why does God keep telling His people to remember, and what would a Christian version of this psalm look like for your own life?
2. Psalm 105:17–22 says Joseph was laid in irons until the time that his word came, and that the word of the Lord tested him. How does God's promise itself become a test, and where have you felt that?
3. The psalm ends by saying God gave them the lands of the nations so that they might keep His statutes and observe His laws (105:44–45). Talk about the relationship between what God gives and what God then expects.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Outline the psalm by naming each stage of the story in order. How many verses does it spend on Joseph, and why might that be?
2. Psalm 105:8–11 says God remembered His covenant to a thousand generations and confirmed it to Jacob. Read Galatians 3:16 and 3:26–29. Who does the New Testament say the promised seed is, and who inherits the promise now?
3. Psalm 105:37 says they came out with silver and gold and that there was not one feeble person among their tribes. Compare Exodus 12:35–36. What does that detail say about God's care in a rushed departure?
4. Read the first ten verses of Psalm 106, which you will study next week, beside Psalm 105. What does each psalm choose to talk about, and why do we need both?
5. Write your own list of ten things God has done in your life and in your family, in order, the way this psalm does. Read it aloud to someone in your household before the week ends.

GOSPELS Luke 23:1–43

Between Two Criminals

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus is dragged before Pilate on political charges, sent to Herod, and mocked. Pilate says three times that he finds no fault in Him and then releases a murderer instead. On the way out of the city Simon of Cyrene carries the cross, and Jesus turns to weeping women with a warning about days that are coming. At Calvary they crucify

Him between two criminals, and He prays for the men driving the nails. Then one of the criminals stops mocking and asks to be remembered.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Pilate declares Jesus innocent three separate times and sentences Him anyway (23:4, 14, 22). Walk through the pressures on him, and talk honestly about how decent people end up doing terrible things.
2. Jesus prays, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing (23:34). Discuss what that prayer reveals about Him, and then read Acts 2:36–38 to see what those same people were later told they had to do.
3. The criminal beside Jesus was saved without being baptized, and many people use him to argue that baptism is unnecessary today. Work through that argument carefully: when did he live, under which covenant did he die, and when was the great commission given?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everyone who mocks Jesus in this passage and what each one says. What do they all have in common in what they demand He prove?
2. Read Luke 23:26–31, where Jesus speaks to the daughters of Jerusalem. Compare Luke 19:41–44 and 21:20–24. What event is He telling them to weep about?
3. Matthew 27:44 says both criminals reviled Him. Compare that with Luke 23:39–43 and trace what the second man came to believe while hanging there. How many separate things does he confess in two sentences?
4. The word paradise appears in Luke 23:43, 2 Corinthians 12:4, and Revelation 2:7, and Luke 16:22–23 describes the state of the dead. What can you say with confidence about where Jesus promised the man would be, and what should you not claim?
5. The dying man asked only to be remembered, and he got far more than he asked. Name one person you have written off as too far gone, and pray for that person by name every day this week.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The writer says a promise of entering God's rest still stands, and warns his readers not to come short of it as the wilderness generation did. He describes the word of God as living and sharp enough to divide soul from spirit, then lifts our eyes to a great High Priest who was tempted in every way we are. Then his tone changes. You ought to be teachers, he says, and you still need milk. And he issues the hardest warning in the New Testament.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Hebrews 4:9–11 says a rest remains for the people of God, and then says to labor to enter it. How can a rest be something you have to work at, and what is the writer actually asking us to do?
2. Hebrews 4:14–16 says our High Priest was tempted in every way we are, yet without sin, so we should come boldly to the throne of grace. How would praying like that differ from the way most of us actually pray?
3. Hebrews 5:11–6:8 warns about people who were enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, and shared in the Holy Spirit, and who then fell away. Read it carefully together. What does the passage teach about whether a Christian can be lost, and how should that be said to a frightened believer?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Hebrews 4:12–13 says the word of God is and does. Which of those descriptions is most uncomfortable, and why?
2. Hebrews 5:1–10 describes what a high priest must be and then shows how Christ met it. Pay special attention to 5:9, where He is called the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. What does obedience have to do with salvation according to that verse?
3. Hebrews 5:12–14 contrasts milk with solid food and says the mature have their senses trained by use. Name the skills a person develops by exercise rather than by information alone.
4. Write out the six items in the foundation of Hebrews 6:1–2. How many of them are things a person hears at the beginning of his Christian life, and what does the writer want them to move on to?
5. Hebrews 6:10–12 says God will not forget your work and labor of love toward His name in ministering to the saints. Name one specific act of ministering to a saint that you will do this week, and say when.