

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 81 OF 104

Hearing and Refusing

Week 81 of 104 • 78% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Jeremiah 38–44
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 108–109
Gospels	John 1:1–34
General New Testament	Hebrews 10

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

A group of frightened survivors comes to Jeremiah and says the most promising sentence in the book: whatever the Lord tells us, we will do it. Ten days later the answer arrives, and they call the prophet a liar and leave for Egypt. That is this week in a sentence. John opens his gospel with light shining into darkness and the heartbreaking line that He came to His own and His own did not receive Him. Hebrews warns about people who received the knowledge of the truth and then trampled it. And in the middle of it all stand the ones who did receive: a foreign servant with a rope and some rags, a preacher in camel's hair pointing away from himself, a congregation urged to hold fast and keep meeting.

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 38–44

From the Cistern to Egypt

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jeremiah is lowered into a muddy cistern to die and is hauled out by an Ethiopian servant with old rags to cushion the ropes. Then the walls are breached, Zedekiah's sons are killed in front of him before his eyes are put out, and the city burns. Babylon sets Gedaliah over the poor who are left, and within months he is murdered at dinner. The survivors ask Jeremiah for God's word, promise to obey it, refuse it, and drag him to Egypt.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Ebed-Melech is a foreigner and a servant in a hostile court, and he is the only man in Jerusalem who does anything about the prophet sinking in the mud (38:7–13). What did the rescue cost him, and what does God say to him afterward in 39:15–18?
2. In Jeremiah 42 the people swear to obey before they hear the answer, and in Jeremiah 43 they call Jeremiah a liar. Why is it so much easier to promise obedience in advance than to give it once the answer actually arrives?

3. Jeremiah 44:15–19 records the people’s own reasoning: things went better for us when we burned incense to the queen of heaven. Where do we still judge a way of life by whether it seems to be working, and how would you answer them from this chapter?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace Zedekiah from 38:14–28 through 39:1–7. List every opportunity he was given and what he did with each one.
2. Read 40:13–41:3. Who warned Gedaliah, how did Gedaliah respond to the warning, and what came of it?
3. Set Jeremiah’s treatment by the Babylonians (39:11–14; 40:1–6) beside his treatment by his own countrymen. Write down both, then say what that contrast reveals about forty years of faithful preaching.
4. Compare 42:5–6 with 43:2. Copy out exactly what the people promised and exactly what they said when the answer came. How long did the promise last?
5. Ebed-Melech sent down worn-out rags so the ropes would not cut into Jeremiah’s arms (38:11–12). Name one person you know who is sinking right now, and name the specific, unglamorous kindness you will do for him before Sunday.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 108–109

Steadfast Heart, Bitter Prayer

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Psalm 108 is an old soldier’s morning song, stitched together from two psalms David had already prayed, declaring a steadfast heart and God’s mercy above the heavens, and then asking for help because the help of man is useless. Psalm 109 is the opposite kind of prayer: a man repaid evil for good and hatred for love, pouring out before God a long and terrible list of things he wants done to the one who betrayed him, and ending, somehow, in praise.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 108 is assembled from two earlier prayers of David (compare Psalm 57:7–11 and Psalm 60:5–12). Why might a man take words he had already prayed years before and pray them again, and when have you needed to do exactly that?

2. Read Psalm 109:1–5 before you read verses 6 through 20. What has been done to this man, and what precisely is he asking God to do about it?
3. Psalm 109:4 says, “In return for my love they are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer.” Set that beside Romans 12:19–21. How does handing your anger to God protect you from taking the matter into your own hands?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Psalm 108:12 says the help of man is useless. Walk back through the last month and list where you went first for help. Be honest about the order.
2. Compare Psalm 108:1–5 with Psalm 57:7–11, and read the title of Psalm 57. What was David’s situation when he first prayed those words?
3. Read Acts 1:15–20 and find which verse of Psalm 109 Peter quotes and how he applies it. What does that show about the way the apostles read the Psalms?
4. Trace the words David uses to describe himself in Psalm 109:22–25. What is his physical and emotional condition while he prays this?
5. Psalm 109 ends in public praise (verses 30–31) before anything has changed. Name one wrong done to you that you have never actually handed over to God, then set a date this week and hand it over in prayer by name.

GOSPELS John 1:1–34

The Word Made Flesh

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

John begins before Genesis does, with the Word who was in the beginning, who was with God, who was God, and through whom everything was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of men, and the darkness has never put it out. He came into the world He had made and His own people did not receive Him. Then a preacher in the wilderness keeps saying who he is not, until at last he points and says, “Behold, the Lamb of God.”

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. John opens his gospel before Bethlehem, before Abraham, before Genesis 1:1. Why does he start there, and what would be missing if he had begun with the manger?
2. Verses 10 through 13 say He came to His own and His own did not receive Him, but that as many as received Him were given the right to become children of God. What does receiving Him involve, and what three human factors does verse 13 rule out?
3. John the Baptist answers nearly every question by saying who he is not (1:19–27). What would it look like this week for you to be that content with a smaller part?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything John 1:1–18 says the Word is and does. Mark the statements that could only be true of God Himself.
2. Set John 1:3 beside Colossians 1:16–17 and Hebrews 1:1–3. Write down what all three passages agree on concerning the Son and creation.
3. John 1:14 says the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, a picture drawn from the tabernacle in the wilderness. Read Exodus 40:34–35 beside it and say what John is claiming.
4. Trace what John the Baptist says about Jesus in 1:15, 1:23, 1:27, 1:29, 1:33, and 1:34. Which of those statements would have been the most startling to a first-century Jewish crowd?
5. John 1:29 calls Him the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Name one sin you have been managing instead of confessing, and deal with it this week rather than next.

Draw Near and Hold Fast

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The writer finishes his argument: the law was only a shadow, the same sacrifices offered endlessly could never take sin away, and Christ came to do God's will and offered one sacrifice for sins forever, then sat down. Out of that come three invitations, to draw near, to hold fast, and to consider one another, along with the command

not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Then comes the sharpest warning in the letter, and a reminder of what these Christians had already suffered.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Hebrews 10:19–22 says we have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. Picture what that sentence meant to someone raised knowing that one man entered that room one day a year. How should that boldness change the way you pray?
2. Hebrews 10:24–25 ties assembling together to stirring up love and good works. Why does the writer connect those two, and what is actually lost, both to the Christian and to the congregation, when someone stops coming?
3. Read Hebrews 10:26–31 slowly. Who is being described, what have they done, and how does this paragraph answer the teaching that a saved person can never be lost?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Set Hebrews 10:11–12 beside 10:14 and list every contrast between the standing priest and the seated Christ.
2. Hebrews 10:16–17 quotes Jeremiah 31 again, and verse 18 draws a conclusion. Write that conclusion in your own words, and say what it means for anyone still offering sacrifices for sin.
3. Verses 22, 23, and 24 each begin with “let us.” List all three, and note what each one asks of you specifically.
4. Read 10:32–34 and list what these Christians had already endured. Then read 10:35–39 and say what the writer is afraid they are about to do.
5. Verse 24 says to consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. Pick one member of the congregation you have not thought about in months, and do something concrete for him before next Sunday.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Jeremiah 45–49 • Psalm 110–113 • John 1:35–2:25 • Hebrews 11

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