

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 83 OF 104

A Kingdom Unshaken

Week 83 of 104 • 80% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Jeremiah 50-52
Wisdom Literature	Psalms 114-117
Gospels	John 3
General New Testament	Hebrews 12-13

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

Almost everything in this week's reading comes apart. Babylon, called the hammer of the whole earth, gets broken. A scroll is tied to a stone and dropped in the Euphrates as a picture of an empire sinking. Jeremiah closes with an inventory of temple bronze being hauled away piece by piece. Even a respected teacher of Israel is told, in the dark, that he has to start over from birth. And then, at the end of Hebrews, comes the sentence that holds the whole week together: we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken. Not will receive. Are receiving. Read the psalms in between and you will hear a people who had lost a country still singing that His mercy endures forever.

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 50-52

The Hammer Broken

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Two long chapters announce the fall of Babylon, the city that had just finished destroying everyone else. She is called a hammer, a golden cup, a destroying mountain, and God says He will break her. In the middle of it He tells His own people to flee out of her and promises that their Redeemer is strong. Seraiah carries a scroll to Babylon, reads it, ties a stone to it, and throws it in the river. Then chapter 52 retells the fall of Jerusalem and ends with a prisoner released.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jeremiah 50:6 calls God's people lost sheep whose own shepherds led them astray, and 50:20 says a day is coming when their iniquity will be searched for and not found. How can both sentences be true of the same people, and what has to happen in between?

2. Babylon was God's chosen instrument of judgment and is now judged herself (50:23; 51:20–24). How do you hold together the truth that God uses wicked nations and still holds them fully accountable for their wickedness?
3. Jeremiah ends with an exiled king let out of prison, given clean clothes, and seated at the table for the rest of his life (52:31–34). Why would a book this dark end there, and where do you need an ending like that right now?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Collect the images used for Babylon in chapters 50 and 51: hammer, golden cup, destroying mountain, threshing floor, and others. List them, and say what each one claims about her.
2. Read Jeremiah 51:59–64 about Seraiah, the scroll, and the stone. Describe exactly what he was told to do, and explain what the sinking scroll was meant to teach.
3. Compare Jeremiah 51:6 and 51:45 with Revelation 18:4. What is the identical command, and what does it ask of God's people who are living inside a doomed system?
4. Jeremiah 52:17–23 inventories the bronze pillars, the carts, the sea, the pots, and the pomegranates carried out of the temple. Why spend that much space on furniture, and what is the writer grieving?
5. Jeremiah 50:34 says, "Their Redeemer is strong; the Lord of hosts is His name." Name the situation you have privately concluded is beyond repair, and say what it would look like to pray that verse over it every day this week.

WISDOM LITERATURE Psalm 114–117

Not Unto Us

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Four short psalms from the Passover collection. Psalm 114 watches the sea run away and the mountains skip like rams when God brings Israel out of Egypt. Psalm 115 refuses all credit for His people and then takes apart the idols of the nations, piece by silent piece. Psalm 116 is one rescued man's thank-you, full of promises to pay what he vowed. Psalm 117 is two verses long, calls every nation to praise the Lord, and is quoted by Paul to prove the Gentiles were always in the plan.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Psalm 115:4–8 says that those who make idols become like them: mouths that never speak, eyes that never see, ears that never hear. Given what we actually give our attention to, what are we in danger of becoming like?
2. Psalm 116 is one man's thanksgiving after God spared his life. Walk through verses 12 through 19 and describe what he promises. What does gratitude look like in this psalm, and how is it different from merely feeling grateful?
3. Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter in the Bible, and Paul quotes it in Romans 15:8–12 to prove that the nations were always meant to praise God. Why would two verses carry that much weight in an argument?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Psalm 114 and list the four parts of creation that reacted to God's presence. What is the poet doing by describing the sea and the mountains that way?
2. Psalm 115:1 says, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory." Think of one thing you did well this month, and write down honestly how you have handled the credit for it.
3. Psalm 116:15 says that the death of His saints is precious in the sight of the Lord. Read Revelation 14:13 and Philippians 1:21–23 beside it, and describe how a Christian should think about a faithful believer's death.
4. Trace the verbs in Psalm 116:1–9 that describe what God did for this man. Then list everything he says he will do in response.
5. Psalms 113 through 118 were sung at Passover, so Jesus very likely sang Psalm 116 on the night He was betrayed (Matthew 26:30). Read it again with that in mind, and write down the line that strikes you differently.

GOSPELS John 3

Born of Water and Spirit

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A ruler of the Jews comes to Jesus after dark with a compliment and gets an answer he did not ask for: unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus takes it literally, and Jesus presses further, born

of water and the Spirit. Then comes the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, the most famous verse in the Bible, and a hard word about loving darkness. The chapter closes with John the Baptist watching his crowd leave for Jesus and saying he could not be happier.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, and a teacher of Israel, and Jesus told him he had to start over from birth. Why would a moral, religious, respected man need that, and what does it say about religious respectability in general?
2. Jesus says a person must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God (3:5). Read Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3–4, and Titus 3:5 alongside it. What is the new birth, and how does a person actually receive it?
3. John 3:19–21 says men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil, and that whoever does the truth comes to the light. Where is there something in your life you would rather not bring into the light, and what would bringing it cost?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything Nicodemus actually says in John 3. Trace his three responses, then look him up in John 7:50–51 and John 19:38–42 and describe the change.
2. Jesus points back to Numbers 21:4–9. Read that account, then explain the comparison He draws in John 3:14–15 and what it took for an Israelite to be healed.
3. Write out John 3:16 one phrase at a time. Beside each phrase, note what it claims about God, about the world, and about the condition on which life is given.
4. Compare John 3:36 in a translation that reads “does not obey the Son.” Set it beside John 3:16 and say what this chapter teaches about the relationship between believing and obeying.
5. John 3:30 says, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Name one place where you have been quietly protecting your own standing, and say what decreasing would look like there this week.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Surrounded by the witnesses of chapter 11, the runner is told to strip off every weight and the sin that entangles, and to fix his eyes on Jesus. Then comes a long, tender passage on chastening: the God who disciplines is treating you as a son. The writer contrasts the terrifying mountain of Sinai with Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and says we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Chapter 13 lands it in ordinary life: hospitality, prisoners, marriage, money, leaders, and praise.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Hebrews 12:5–11 says the Lord chastens every son He receives and that no chastening seems pleasant at the time. How would you tell God's discipline apart from ordinary hardship, and does this passage actually require you to tell them apart?
2. Hebrews 12:28 says we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken. Notice the tense of the verb. What is being claimed about when the kingdom came, and what should a citizen of an unshakeable kingdom worry about less?
3. Hebrews 13 runs through a rapid list of ordinary duties: brotherly love, hospitality, prisoners, marriage, contentment, leaders, praise. Which one is least natural to you, and what would obeying it cost you this week?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Hebrews 12:1–2 uses the picture of a race. List everything the runner is told to do, and note carefully what he is told to look at.
 2. Read Hebrews 12:16–17 and then Genesis 25:29–34. What did Esau trade, why is he called profane, and what was it that he could not recover afterward?
 3. Set Hebrews 12:18–24 in two columns: what Israel came to at Sinai, and what Christians have come to now. What is the writer proving by that contrast?
 4. Hebrews 13:7 and 13:17 both concern those who lead. List what members are asked to do for their leaders, then read 1 Timothy 3:1–7 for the kind of men those leaders are to be.
 5. Hebrews 13:15–16 calls praise, doing good, and sharing “sacrifices” that please God. Name one act of sharing this week that will genuinely cost you something, and do it without telling anyone you did it.
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NEXT WEEK'S READING: Lamentations 1-5 · Psalm 118 · John 4:1-45 · James 1-2

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