

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 99 OF 104

Fruit That Remains

Week 99 of 104 • 95% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Amos 1-9
Wisdom Literature	Ecclesiastes 5-6
Gospels	John 15:1-16:4
General New Testament	Revelation 10-11

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

This week is about what actually lasts. A shepherd from Tekoa walks north into a boom economy and tells a comfortable, religious nation that God cannot bear their assemblies while the poor are being sold for a pair of sandals. Solomon watches a man who loves money get everything he wanted and lie awake anyway. On the walk out of Jerusalem, past the vines, Jesus tells eleven men that a branch which stops drawing life from Him withers, and that He chose them to bear fruit that remains. And John eats a scroll that is honey in his mouth and acid in his stomach, then watches two witnesses die in the street and stand up again. Attached to God, things last. Detached, nothing does.

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 Amos 1-9

Let Justice Roll Down

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A herdsman leaves his sycamore figs in Judah and walks into the wealthiest years the northern kingdom ever had. He opens by pronouncing doom on six neighboring nations, then on Judah, and then, with the crowd still nodding, on Israel. What follows is a catalog of comfortable sin: ivory beds, rigged scales, bribed courts, crowded festivals, and the poor sold for a pair of sandals. He sees locusts, fire, a plumb line, and a basket of summer fruit, and he is ordered out of town by the king's priest.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Amos spends nearly two chapters announcing judgment on Israel's neighbors, and you can almost hear the crowd cheering, right up until 2:6. What is he doing with that structure, and when have you done the same thing while listening to preaching?

2. Read Amos 5:21–24 aloud. God says He hates their feast days and will not listen to their songs. Work carefully through what He is rejecting there and what He is not rejecting, remembering that He is the one who appointed those assemblies.
3. In 6:1–6 wealthy men lie on ivory beds, invent instruments, drink from bowls, and are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. What would being grieved actually look like in our town this month, and what keeps us comfortable instead?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List the eight peoples addressed from 1:3 through 2:16 in the order Amos names them. Which one comes last, and what would that order have done to the first audience?
2. Five times in Amos 4:6–11 God says, “yet you have not returned to Me.” List the five disasters, and explain what each one was intended to accomplish.
3. Read Amos 7:10–17, where Amaziah orders the preacher out of Bethel. Note how Amos answers regarding his own credentials, and say what that settles about who authorizes a man to preach.
4. Amos 9:11–15 promises that the fallen tabernacle of David will be raised. Read how James uses that promise in Acts 15:13–18, and write down what an inspired apostle says it means.
5. Amos 8:4–6 describes men who waited impatiently for the holy day to end so they could get back to cheating their customers. Name one place where your work and your worship are not telling the same story, and change it this week.

WISDOM LITERATURE Ecclesiastes 5–6

Never Quite Enough

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The Preacher turns to two places where people fool themselves: the house of God and the bank. Watch your step when you go to worship, he says, listen more than you talk, keep your words few, and pay what you vow. Then he examines money with the same cold eye: the lover of silver never has enough, wealth brings more mouths to feed it, sleep gets harder, and a man leaves as naked as he arrived. Then the worst case: a man given everything and no ability to enjoy it.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Ecclesiastes 5:1–2 tells you to guard your steps when you go to the house of God and to let your words be few, because God is in heaven and you are on earth. How would our assemblies and our prayers look different if we took those two verses seriously?
2. Ecclesiastes 5:10 says whoever loves silver will never be satisfied with silver. Why does money keep its promises so badly, and how can a person honestly tell whether he has come to love it?
3. In 6:1–2 a man has wealth, honor, and everything he could want, and God does not give him the power to enjoy any of it. Where does the Preacher say the ability to enjoy life comes from, and what does that do to our assumptions about getting ahead?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read Ecclesiastes 5:1–7 and list everything the Preacher says about the words we bring to God. Compare his counsel with Matthew 6:7 and Matthew 5:33–37.
2. Trace what happens to the lover of money through 5:10–17, writing each loss in order. What does the Preacher say the man carries away in 5:15?
3. Compare 5:18–20 with 2:24–26 from two weeks ago. State the Preacher's repeated answer to emptiness, and note carefully who he says is the source of it.
4. Read 1 Timothy 6:6–10 and 6:17–19 beside Ecclesiastes 5. Where does Paul agree with Solomon, and what is Paul able to add that Solomon could not yet say?
5. Look honestly at your last month of spending. Name one expense that exists to feed the appetite described in 5:10, and redirect that exact amount this month to someone who genuinely needs it.

GOSPELS John 15:1–16:4

The Vine and the Branches

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Jesus takes up a picture every Israelite knew and puts Himself at the center of it. He is the true vine, His Father is the vinedresser, and the disciples are branches whose only business is staying connected. Fruitless branches are removed; fruitful ones are cut back to produce more. Then the tone warms: abide in My love, keep My

commandments, love one another, you are My friends. Then it darkens: if the world hated Me, it will hate you, and some who kill you will think they are serving God.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus says that every branch in Me which bears no fruit is taken away (15:2), and that a branch which does not abide is cast out, withers, and is burned (15:6). Talk honestly about what those verses teach concerning a Christian's security, and about what they do not teach.
2. Abiding is the central command of this passage, and it is easier to admire than to define. In concrete terms, what does a person actually do on an ordinary Tuesday to abide in Christ?
3. Jesus moves straight from "love one another" to "the world will hate you" (15:17–19). Why do those two belong back to back, and where have you personally felt the second one?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List everything the vinedresser does in 15:1–8 and everything the branch does. Notice what the branch is never asked to do, and say why that matters.
2. Compare John 15:6 with Hebrews 3:12–14, Hebrews 10:26–31, and 2 Peter 2:20–22. State in your own words what these passages agree on.
3. Trace the word abide through 15:1–11. Count how many times it appears, and list the different things we are told to abide in.
4. Jesus calls the apostles friends instead of servants in 15:14–15. On what condition does He base that word, and how does what is said about Abraham in James 2:23 fit the same pattern?
5. John 15:16 says He appointed them to bear fruit that should remain. Name one thing you are pouring your life into that will not remain and one that will, then move an hour from the first to the second this week.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Between the sixth and seventh trumpets, everything pauses. A mighty angel plants one foot on the sea and one on land, seven thunders speak, and John is forbidden to write them. He is handed a little scroll and told to eat it: honey in the mouth, bitter in the stomach. He measures the temple, and two witnesses in sackcloth prophesy for 1,260 days, are killed by a beast, lie unburied while the world celebrates, then stand up. The seventh trumpet sounds, and heaven announces whose kingdom this is.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. John is told to eat the little scroll, and it is honey in his mouth and acid in his stomach (10:9–10). Why would God's own message taste both ways to the man who carries it, and which of the two flavors do we tend to leave out when we speak it?
2. The two witnesses prophesy, are killed, lie in the street while the world exchanges gifts, and then stand up. How would that sequence have sounded to Christians who had watched friends die for refusing to say that Caesar is Lord?
3. Revelation 11:15 announces that the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Read it beside Colossians 1:13 and Acts 2:33–36, and discuss when the reign of Christ actually began.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Note the repeated time periods in 11:2, 11:3, and 11:9 (forty-two months, 1,260 days, three and a half days). Work out how they relate to each other, and explain why half of seven is a fitting symbol here.
 2. The two witnesses are described with imagery from Moses and Elijah and are called two olive trees and two lampstands. Read Zechariah 4:1–14 and Deuteronomy 19:15, and say what the number two contributes to the picture.
 3. List everything that happens to the witnesses in 11:7–12, in order. Where does that sequence match the death and resurrection of Jesus, and what is the point of the match?
 4. Read 11:15–18 and list everything the twenty-four elders give thanks for. Which items on your list are already true of Christ right now?
 5. Revelation 11:3 keeps the witnesses in sackcloth the entire time they testify. Name one place where you have stayed quiet about Christ because speaking would cost you comfort, and speak there this week.
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NEXT WEEK'S READING: Obadiah, Jonah • Ecclesiastes 7–8 • John 16:5–33 • Revelation 12–13

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