

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 102 OF 104

Consider Your Ways

Week 102 of 104 · 98% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Habakkuk 1-3; Zephaniah 1-3; Haggai 1-2
Wisdom Literature	Song of Solomon 1-2
Gospels	John 18:25-19:27
General New Testament	Revelation 17-18

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

This week four readings all ask the same uncomfortable question: what are you actually building, and for whom? Habakkuk stands on his watchtower arguing with God about why the wicked prosper, and comes down with one sentence to live on. Zephaniah finds men settled comfortably in the conviction that God will do nothing at all. Haggai looks at paneled houses going up while the Lord's house lies in rubble and says, twice, consider your ways. The Song of Solomon celebrates a love guarded and unshared. Then Pilate weighs truth against his career in a stone courtyard, and John watches an empire's merchants weep over cargo they can no longer sell.

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 **Habakkuk 1-3; Zephaniah 1-3; Haggai 1-2**

Waiting, Wrath, and Rebuilding

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Habakkuk does something no other prophet does: he argues. He complains about violence, God answers by naming the Babylonians, and Habakkuk complains harder before climbing his watchtower to wait. Zephaniah announces a day of the Lord that sweeps Judah and the nations alike, then ends with God singing over a rescued remnant. Haggai preaches five short sermons in four months to people who have paneled their own houses while the temple sits in ruins, and in twenty three days they go back to work.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Habakkuk 1:13 asks how a God too pure to look on evil can use a nation more wicked than Judah to punish Judah. Follow how God answers in chapter 2, and discuss why "the just shall live by his faith" is an answer at all.
2. Haggai asks whether it is time to live in paneled houses while God's house lies waste (1:4), and then twice tells the people to consider their ways. Where does that same arrangement show up in our calendars, our budgets, and our Saturdays?

3. Zephaniah spends two chapters on wrath and then says the Lord your God in your midst will rejoice over you with singing (3:17). How do those two pictures belong to the same God, and what would be lost if we kept only the one we like?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Write out Habakkuk's two complaints and God's two answers in order. Where does the prophet stand while he waits (2:1), and what has changed in him by 3:17–19?
2. Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted three times in the New Testament: Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. Read Hebrews 10:38–39 with its next verses. What kind of faith is being described there?
3. List everything Haggai 1:5–11 says had gone wrong in the people's fields, homes, and wages. How does God connect those troubles to the state of His house?
4. Zephaniah 1:12 describes men settled on their dregs who say the Lord will do neither good nor evil. Compare 2 Peter 3:3–4. What does that settled comfort look like in a churchgoing person?
5. Haggai 2:15–19 promises blessing from the very day they began to build again. Name the one thing you have been putting off in the Lord's work, set a date for it this week, and tell one person the date.

WISDOM LITERATURE Song of Solomon 1–2

A Love Worth Guarding

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

A young woman speaks first, and she speaks plainly about wanting her beloved. She is self-conscious about her sun-darkened skin and the vineyard she was made to keep. He answers with praise, she answers back, and the two trade admiration in images drawn from flocks, spices, cedar beams, apple trees, and a banquet house. Spring arrives, the fig tree puts forth green figs, and he calls her to come away. Twice she warns the daughters of Jerusalem not to awaken love before its time.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Twice in these chapters the bride charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to stir up or awaken love until it pleases (2:7). What is the wisdom in that warning, and how would you put it to a sixteen-year-old this week without sounding like a lecture?

2. The Song spends its time on delight rather than duty, and God put it in the Bible. Why does that matter for how Christians talk about marriage, and what happens in a congregation where the subject is never spoken of at all?
3. Song of Solomon 2:15 asks that the little foxes be caught, because it is the little ones that spoil the vines. Name the small things, not the scandals, that quietly ruin affection between a husband and a wife.

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read 1:9–17 and 2:1–6 and note who is speaking in each section. Write down what each says about the other. Which one does more praising?
2. Song of Solomon 2:16 says my beloved is mine and I am his. Compare Genesis 2:24 and 1 Corinthians 7:3–4. What conviction do the three passages share about belonging?
3. The bride says in 1:6 that she did not keep her own vineyard. Trace the vineyard images through these two chapters. What does she seem to mean about herself?
4. The refrain of 2:7 appears again at 3:5 and 8:4. Find all three and note what comes just before each. Why would a love song need a restraint repeated three times?
5. Choose one of the little foxes you named and deal with it this week: a habit of interrupting, a tone, a phone at the table, a courtesy you stopped offering. Tell your spouse what you are doing and why. If you are not married, do the same for the closest relationship God has given you.

GOSPELS John 18:25–19:27

The Trial in the Courtyard

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Peter denies his Lord a third time, and a rooster crows. Jesus is taken to the Praetorium, where Pilate walks in and out between a crowd who will not enter a Gentile hall and a prisoner who says His kingdom is not of this world. Pilate asks what truth is and does not wait for the answer. There is a scourging, a crown of thorns, and a crowd shouting for Caesar. Then a hill, a title in three languages, soldiers dividing clothes, and a son given to a mother.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Jesus tells Pilate that His kingdom is not of this world, and that if it were, His servants would fight. What does He mean by that, and what does it rule out about the kind of kingdom He came to establish?
2. Pilate states three times that he finds no fault in Jesus, and hands Him over anyway (18:38; 19:4, 6). Walk through the pressures on him. What makes a man do what he knows is wrong while insisting on his own innocence?
3. The chief priests answer Pilate with, we have no king but Caesar (19:15). Given who they were and what they claimed to believe, how did they get there, and where do we say the same sentence in quieter words?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Trace Pilate's movements in and out of the Praetorium through 18:28–19:16. Count the trips, and note what he says inside and what he says outside. What does the pattern reveal about him?
2. Compare Peter's three denials (18:17, 25–27) with what Jesus is saying in the same hours (18:20–21, 36–37). Set the two columns side by side. What does the contrast teach about courage?
3. Read 19:23–24 and then Psalm 22:18. List the details of the crucifixion in this reading that fulfill Scripture written centuries earlier.
4. Pilate wrote a title in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin and refused to change it (19:19–22). Why would John bother to record the three languages, and what did Pilate say more truly than he knew?
5. From the cross Jesus made provision for His mother (19:26–27). Name one person in your life whose care you have assumed someone else is handling, and this week make an actual arrangement for them.

GENERAL NEW TESTAMENT Revelation 17–18

The Fall of Babylon

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

An angel shows John a woman seated on a scarlet beast, decked in purple and gold, drunk with the blood of the saints. He is told the seven heads are seven mountains and that the Lamb will overcome those who war against Him. Then a second angel announces that Babylon the great has fallen, a voice calls God's people to come out of

her, and kings, merchants, and shipmasters stand at a distance weeping over a market that has collapsed. A millstone goes into the sea, and the music stops.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. The voice from heaven says, come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins (18:4). Rome was the air those Christians breathed. What kind of separation was being asked for, and what would the same call require of us?
2. In 18:11–19 the kings, merchants, and sailors weep, and not one of them weeps for a person. Read their lament closely. What does their grief expose about the system they served?
3. Heaven is told to rejoice over Babylon's fall (18:20) while the same book says God wanted men to repent. How do we hold gladness at God's justice together with genuine love for the people under it?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Make a list of the cargo in 18:12–13 and read it in order. Note carefully what the last item on the list is, and what its position says about the whole economy.
2. Revelation 17:9 says the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and 17:18 identifies her as the great city that reigns over the kings of the earth. Who would a first century reader in Asia have understood this to be?
3. Compare Revelation 18 with Jeremiah 50:1–13 and 51:6–10. How much of John's language comes from the older prophecy, and why would he describe Rome in Babylon's words?
4. Revelation 17:14 says the Lamb shall overcome them, and describes those with Him as called, chosen, and faithful. Trace that last word through the book (2:10; 13:10; 14:12). What is being asked of these readers?
5. Babylon seduces before it enslaves. Name one strand of it you have been comfortable with: a spending habit, an appetite, a loyalty that quietly outranks Christ. Cut that one strand this week and tell someone you did.

NEXT WEEK'S READING: Zechariah 1–8 · Song of Solomon 3:1–5:9 · John 19:28–20:18 · Revelation 19–20

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