

Through the Bible in 24 Months



WEEK 104 OF 104

Follow Thou Me

Week 104 of 104 · 100% of the way through the Bible

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

General Old Testament	Zechariah 9–14, Malachi 1–4
Wisdom Literature	Song of Solomon 5:10–8:14
Gospels	John 20:19–21:25
General New Testament	Revelation 21–22

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

One hundred and four weeks ago you started at “In the beginning.” This week you finish. Notice that none of these four readings ends with a period; every one of them ends with a hand pointing forward. Malachi closes the Old Testament with a promise of a messenger still to come and then four hundred years of silence. The Song closes with a woman calling her beloved to make haste. John closes with a charcoal fire, a restored man, and two words: follow me. And Revelation closes the whole book with the Spirit and the bride saying, Come, and whoever is thirsty invited to take the water of life freely. You have read the Bible. Now it reads you.

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 **Zechariah 9–14, Malachi 1–4**

The Prophets Have the Last Word

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

Zechariah turns to a King who comes lowly, riding on a donkey, and then to a shepherd valued at thirty pieces of silver, a struck shepherd whose sheep scatter, and a people who look on One they have pierced and mourn. Malachi then closes the Old Testament as a series of arguments: God says one thing, the people answer back, and God answers them. Blemished animals on the altar, broken marriages, robbed offerings, weary words, and a final promise of a messenger before the great and dreadful day.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Zechariah 9:9 announces a king who comes just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, and Matthew 21:4–5 says that is exactly how Jesus entered Jerusalem. What kind of king does a donkey announce, and how does that correct what we instinctively expect power to look like?
2. Malachi 3:8–10 accuses Israel of robbing God in tithes and offerings. The tithe belonged to the Law of Moses and is not bound on Christians. Talk through the principle underneath it, and then read 1 Corinthians 16:2 and 2 Corinthians 9:6–7. How does the New Testament pattern of giving express that same principle?

3. In Malachi 1:6–14 the priests bring the blind, the lame, and the sick to the altar, and God tells them to try offering that to the governor. Where do we quietly hand God the leftovers, and what would it cost us to change that this month?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Find these four passages in Zechariah and then the verse in the New Testament that quotes each one: 9:9 with Matthew 21:4–5; 11:12–13 with Matthew 27:9–10; 12:10 with John 19:37; 13:7 with Matthew 26:31. Write down what each predicted and how it came about.
2. Malachi is built as a running argument. Find every place where God says something and the people answer, “Wherein?” or “What have we said?” List them. What do those replies reveal about the people’s self awareness?
3. Malachi 4:5–6 promises Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Read Matthew 11:13–14, Matthew 17:12–13, and Luke 1:17. Who did Jesus Himself say that prophecy was about, and when was it fulfilled?
4. Malachi 3:16–18 describes people who feared the Lord and spoke often one to another, and a book of remembrance written before Him. Who are the people you speak with that way, and what do you talk about when you are together?
5. Before next Sunday, decide what proportion of your income you will purpose to give, write the figure down, and set it aside on the first day of the week as 1 Corinthians 16:2 directs. Give it cheerfully or do not give it at all (2 Corinthians 9:7).

WISDOM LITERATURE **Song of Solomon 5:10–8:14**

Love Strong as Death

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

The daughters of Jerusalem ask what makes her beloved better than any other, and the bride answers by describing him from head to foot and ending with the simplest words in the book: this is my beloved, and this is my friend. The poem moves through gardens and vineyards, through his praise of her and her invitation to go

out to the fields together. Then it rises to its great declaration about love and jealousy, seals and flames and many waters, and closes with her calling him to hurry.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Song of Solomon 8:6–7 says love is strong as death, that its coals are a most vehement flame, that many waters cannot quench it, and that a man who offered everything he owned for it would be utterly despised. Work through those images one at a time. What kind of love is being described, and how is it different from what our culture means by the word?
2. Asked what makes her beloved different from anyone else, the bride praises him at length and then lands on, this is my beloved, and this is my friend (5:16). Why might friendship be the last word in a love poem, and what happens to a marriage when the friendship is allowed to lapse?
3. In 8:8–9 the family looks at a younger sister and asks what they will do for her when she is spoken for, and answers in terms of walls and doors. How do a family and a congregation actually build that kind of protection around a young person today?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Read 8:6 and note that the bride asks to be set as a seal upon his heart and upon his arm. A seal marked ownership and authenticity. What is she asking for, and what does it say about what love wants?
2. Compare Song of Solomon 8:7 with Ephesians 5:25–33. What does each passage say love is willing to spend, and where does Paul locate the pattern for a husband's love?
3. Trace the vineyard image from 1:6 to 8:11–12. At the start she has not kept her own vineyard; at the end she says her vineyard is before her. What has changed across the book?
4. The Song ends with the bride calling her beloved to make haste (8:14). Compare Revelation 22:17 and 22:20. Why is longing an appropriate note for a book of Scripture to end on?
5. Do one thing this week that costs you something for the sake of the closest covenant relationship God has given you: a day off taken, a purchase declined, an evening cleared, a conversation you have been avoiding. Name it before you leave class.

Peace, Thomas, and Breakfast

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

That same evening, behind locked doors, Jesus stands among them and says peace be unto you, shows them His hands and side, and sends them as the Father sent Him. Thomas, who was not there, says he will not believe without touching the wounds, and eight days later gets the chance and answers with the highest confession in the Gospel. John then states exactly why he wrote the book. Finally, beside a charcoal fire on a beach, Jesus asks Peter three times whether he loves Him.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. John states his purpose in 20:30–31: these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life through His name. How should a stated purpose like that change the way we read the whole book, and what has John been doing all along to accomplish it?
2. Thomas demands evidence, and Jesus gives it to him without a word of rebuke, then adds a blessing on those who have not seen and have believed. What does that exchange say about honest doubt, and how should a congregation treat the person asking hard questions?
3. Three times at a charcoal fire Peter had denied Him, and three times at a charcoal fire Jesus asks whether Peter loves Him and then gives him work to do. Where has failure made you hold back from serving, and what does Jesus do about that in this scene?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. List what Jesus does in 20:19–23: what He says, what He shows them, what He gives them, and what He sends them to do. Compare 20:23 with Acts 2:38 and Acts 10:43. Were the apostles given personal authority to pardon, or the message by which God pardons?
2. Thomas answers, my Lord and my God, and Jesus accepts it. Trace John's claims about who Jesus is at 1:1, 1:18, 8:58, and 10:30. What has the whole book been building toward in that one sentence?
3. Read 21:15–17 and write down the three questions and the three charges. Then read 18:17, 18:25, and 18:27. What is Jesus doing for Peter, and why do it in front of the other six?
4. Peter turns, sees John, and asks what will happen to him, and Jesus answers, what is that to you, follow Me (21:21–22). Where does comparison with other Christians most often derail your own obedience?
5. Jesus asked Peter one question three times, and it was not about his competence. Answer it yourself this week by doing what He told Peter to do: name one member of the flock who is struggling, and go feed that sheep.

All Things New

WHAT YOU WILL FIND HERE

John sees a new heaven and new earth, and a holy city coming down from God as a bride. A voice announces that God will dwell with men, that He will wipe away every tear, and that death, sorrow, crying, and pain are gone. The city is gold and gemstone and light, with gates that never shut and no temple, because God and the Lamb are its temple. A river runs down the middle street, a tree of life grows on both banks, and the Bible ends with an invitation.

FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

1. Revelation 21:4 says God will wipe away every tear, and that there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. Read it slowly and name what is removed and what is promised. How should that shape the way a Christian grieves at a funeral (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18)?
2. The city has no temple, no sun, no moon, and no night (21:22–25). Take each absence in turn and say what it means that the thing is not needed. What is John telling us about what it will be like to be with God?
3. After twenty two chapters of beasts, plagues, and thrones, the Bible ends with the Spirit and the bride saying, Come, and an invitation to whoever is thirsty to take the water of life freely (22:17). Who is meant to be saying that word, and what does it cost to say it to somebody?

EXTENDED CLASS DISCUSSION OR SELF-STUDY

1. Make a list of everything the new Jerusalem does not have: read 21:1, 21:4, 21:22–25, and 22:3. What does the absence of each of those things tell you about what life there is like?
2. The tree of life appears at both ends of the Bible. Compare Genesis 2:9 and 3:22–24 with Revelation 22:2 and 22:14. What happened to human access to that tree, and what has been done about it?
3. Read 21:8 and 21:27 honestly, noting who is excluded from the city. Then read 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 and pay close attention to the words, and such were some of you. What made the difference for those Corinthians?
4. Revelation 22:18–19 warns against adding to or taking from the words of this book. Compare Deuteronomy 4:2 and Galatians 1:6–9. What is God protecting, and why does it matter for how we handle Scripture and worship?

5. You have now read the entire Bible, from “In the beginning” to “even so, come, Lord Jesus.” The last invitation in it is put in the mouth of the Spirit and the bride, and the bride is the church, which means it is put in your mouth. Name one person who is thirsty, decide what you will say first, and say it before this month is out.