

March 23/24, 2024

"The Cross"

Pastor Aaron Buer



## **SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.**

### **2024 Challenge:** Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

**March:** Read Zechariah, Malachi and Hosea to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

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## Day 1 Matthew 27:32-53 | The Cross

**After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.** Matthew 27:31

Good Friday and Easter are the central elements of the Bible. The books of the Bible either look forward to the cross or look back at it. The Old Testament is primarily a story of longing for the promised Messiah. The New Testament starts with the story of Jesus and primarily shows the implications of the cross for Jesus's followers. The crucifixion is the central event of humanity.

Today, it seems like crosses are everywhere—cross necklaces, t-shirts, tattoos, and friendship bracelets. Part of this is because of how significant the cross is. There's also a downside to the cross being everywhere. We can take it for granted, or even worse, it can become a cultural symbol without real meaning. This week calls us to remember the life-changing nature of the cross. It's not something we should ever get over or move past. What Jesus did on the cross should regularly awaken us to a depth of gratitude and love for God, leading to obedience and trust in him. The cross of Jesus offers forgiveness, righteousness and restoration. We have no greater need than that.

**TODAY:** Commit to focusing on the amazing gift of Jesus's willingness to go to the cross. Consider how you can incorporate times of gratitude and reflection for the forgiveness, righteousness and restoration offered through the cross into your routine going forward.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Hosea 6-7](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note details that may allude to Jesus's resurrection.

## Day 2 Romans 3:21-26 | Guilt Forgiven

**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** Romans 3:23

Darkness covers the land at noon. Whether at home, working in the field, shopping in the market, or worshipping in the temple, everyone likely stopped to wonder what was happening. It's a moment they will surely remember for years to come. This happens as Jesus hangs on the cross—darkness when there should be light. Night overtakes the day ([Matthew 27:45](#)). It is ominous and means something significant. For the Jewish people, darkness symbolizes judgment ([Amos 8:9](#)). The Bible's storyline begins with God creating the world and calling it good. But three chapters in, humans rebel against God, deciding they are better off without him. The consequences of this rebellion are disastrous.

Everything wrong with our world and us results from this first rebellion and our continued rebellion against God. The Bible is very clear that humans, collectively and individually, are guilty before God ([Romans 3:23](#)). This can be

a tough truth to accept. We don't like to admit we are wrong. However, admitting our guilt is critical in accepting the forgiveness offered through the cross. If we aren't guilty of sin, there's no need for the cross.

**TODAY:** Spend some time thinking about your thoughts, words and actions that don't align with God's Word and how he created you to live. Confess your sins to God. Ask him for forgiveness and thank him for the forgiveness Jesus paid for on the cross. If there's a particular sin you find yourself repeating, find a trusted friend or mentor to pray for you and hold you accountable in that area.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Hosea 8-9](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

## Day 3 Matthew 27:46-50 | His Righteousness

**And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.** Matthew 26:50

The Romans implement the cross because it is exceedingly tortuous and humiliating. This punishment is reserved for the worst criminals who commit crimes that destabilize society, such as theft and insurrection. The cross is more than a punishment. It's also a warning. If someone goes against Rome, they end up on a cross. Crucifixions are conducted in public places to provide opportunity for mocking and scorn. Every breath is laborious. The energy required to raise oneself with one's arms and legs moves a person closer to exhaustion and asphyxiation. Jesus endures all of this willingly, even though he is innocent.

Jesus not only dies in our place, he also obeys in our place. He lives a perfect life, without sin, and goes to the cross out of love. He pays the price for our sins there, and something amazing happens. Jesus takes our guilt and gives us his righteousness ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)). What an incredible gift. He does what we could never do. When we accept his gift of life, God no longer sees the wrongs we've done but the right Jesus did. The work of the cross isn't something ordinary. It's not something we should get used to. It's truly astonishing.

**Today:** Sit in the love of God for you, recognizing what Jesus endured on your behalf. Join the Ada Bible Worship team as they sing "How Deep the Father's Love." May the lyrics become the anthem of your heart this week.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Hosea 10](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

## Day 4 Matthew 27:46-54 | God's Presence

**At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.** Matthew 27:51a

Sin is rebellion against God. The Bible makes it clear sin separates people from God. It isn't how God wanted our relationship with him to be. God walks and talks with Adam and Eve in the garden. But when they sin, they are kicked out of the garden. In the Old Testament, God establishes a special relationship with the Israelites and chooses to be present with them. The tabernacle and, later, the temple symbolize God's presence. But the layout of both the tabernacle and temple reflects sin's separation. One thing is clear through the use of courtyards and separate rooms: sin has made God's dwelling place apart from people.

The cross does something unimaginable. Matthew tells us that at the moment of Jesus's death, the curtain separating the room representing God's dwelling place in the temple tears from top to bottom. It's a clear symbol that God's presence is now available to people. How? Because of the double transfer—Jesus takes our sin and gives his righteousness to us. The sin that separates us from God is forgiven if we accept Jesus's gift of life. The cross is marvelous. It radically redefines the relationship between God and people.

**TODAY:** The double transfer is available to you. Jesus wants to forgive your sins and give you his righteousness. He wants to restore your relationship with God. You simply need to turn to him. For more information about what it means to turn to Jesus, email us at [btw@adabible.org](mailto:btw@adabible.org). We'd love to have a conversation with you. If you've accepted Jesus's free gift of life, spend some time thanking God for the gift of his presence, which is available through the beautiful double transfer.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** [Hosea 11-12](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

## Day 5 Matthew 27:11-66 | Good Friday

**Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.** Matthew 27:61

Today is Good Friday when Christians have intentionally slowed down to reflect on the cross for centuries. It's a day to sit with the weight of the cross and reflect on the anguish and pain Jesus bore because of sin. Two thousand years ago, a group of people stood by watching Jesus die. Mathew references three women specifically. They have been following and caring for Jesus. Surely, their hearts sunk as Jesus cried out for the final time, and they noticed his body stop struggling for oxygen. Now, the person they had dedicated years to had succumbed to the execution. Jesus is dead. It must've been heartbreaking.

It is both emotionally and intellectually easy to move through the pain and suffering of the cross quickly. Unlike the women on that Friday, we know Jesus will rise again on Sunday. But, there is value in sitting with the weight of the cross, acknowledging the pain our sins brought upon Jesus. This regular reflection, on Good Friday and every time we take communion, should impact how we live. Meditating on the cost of the cross is transformative. It can reorient our hearts toward hating our sins and desiring to obey God's way. The reminder of our brokenness can cause us to have far more grace for the failures of others.

**TODAY:** Sit in the weight of the cross today. Find 10 minutes, a half hour or an hour to spend alone with God, reflecting on the cross in silence. Open your heart to God. Acknowledge your sin sent Jesus to the cross. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see how your heart, character and actions need to change because of the cross.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Hosea 13-14](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.