

March 2/3, 2024  
"Faith and Endurance"  
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 & Hosea to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

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## Day 1 Zechariah 9:9-13 | Jesus in the Minor Prophets

**Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.** Zechariah 9:9

This year, we are looking for Jesus in the Old Testament to see how God's plan always included Jesus saving us from our sins. As we anticipate Easter, we see prophets who foreshadow Jesus's coming and specific events in his final days.

Zechariah, the priest, ministers in Jerusalem post-exile. Opposition stalls the rebuilding of the temple and people grow deeply discouraged. Zechariah reminds them that God watches them, is still working and will restore all things at just the right time. He points to Jesus through the coming Branch, a ruler from the line of David ([Zechariah 3:8, 6:9-15, 9:9-10](#)). The coming King will ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, pointing to Jesus's triumphal entry before his trial and crucifixion ([Zechariah 9:9](#)). He will be a good shepherd and not desert his flock ([Zechariah 11:13:7-9](#)). The prophet also points to salvation in Jesus, who will be pierced and mourned for ([Zechariah 12:10](#)).

Malachi writes after the temple was rebuilt. They feel disillusioned and don't seem to experience what God promised. They suffer economic hardship, drought and crop failure. They wait for the coming Messiah. Malachi prophesies of Jesus's coming with the promise of a messenger preparing the way, who will be John the Baptist ([Malachi 3:1](#)). Malachi also promises that the Lord they seek will suddenly come to his temple ([Malachi 3:1](#)). Jesus fulfills this when he arrives at the temple as an infant with Mary and Joseph. The prophet also points to a refiner who will purify and cleanse ([Malachi 3:2-3](#)). Imagery of the sun of righteousness who brings healing points to Jesus too ([Malachi 4:2](#)).

Hosea writes during one of the most turbulent and trying times before captivity and exile. The book often depicts Israel's unfaithfulness through nature and family imagery. Even Hosea's life offers a picture of God and his people. While Israel is like an unfaithful wife, God is the faithful husband who loves and calls her back to himself. The picture of faithful, enduring love despite unfaithfulness foreshadows Jesus's love and willingness to pay a great price to redeem people to himself. Hosea looks forward to a king like David, who will ultimately be Jesus ([Hosea 3:1-5](#)). Hosea looks forward to Jesus's resurrection with a picture of being raised up on the third day so people can live before him ([Hosea 6:2](#)).

**TODAY:** Ask God to open your eyes to how the prophets point to Jesus as you read this month. Thank him that his plan always included sending Jesus to die for our sins.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Zechariah 1](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

## Day 2 James 5:7-11| Be Patient

**Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.** James 5:7

As he nears the end of his letter, James reminds fellow Christians suffering persecution to be patient. Using the analogy of a farmer, he frames patience against the backdrop of cultivating crops in a desert environment. Once the seeds are planted, it's a waiting game of patience as the rains only come twice a year. No rain means no harvest, which means no food. When the rains finally appear, farmers celebrate the goodness of God who brings the rain that gives life.

When we go through rough times, James wants us to remember the farmer who waits patiently for God to bring rain. "You know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" ([James 1:3-4](#)). God will mature us into the character of Christ as we wait patiently. One way we can demonstrate our faith in God is by developing the discipline of seeing his goodness in the things he provides while we're waiting. Seeing something good is like getting some rain. It reminds us that God will triumph in the end.

**TODAY:** Look over the past week for at least three positive things you can see. (E.g., Your teenager said "thank you," it was 70 degrees in February or you got a smile from your mother who has Alzheimer's.) Thanking God builds trust, so thank him for each positive thing and the hope it gives that he is at work in you.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Zechariah 2-3](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Notice the high priest and branch imagery and how that points to what Jesus will do.

## Day 3 James 5:8-20 | Stand Firm

**You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.** James 5:8

It's good to remember James's letter wasn't written to an individual, but to Christian communities in the Roman world. When James says to "stand firm" he means it's the responsibility of the whole community to stand firm together. Standing firm is something believers were never meant to do alone. Christians need each other. These communities understood this as they struggled under persecution and hardship.

James goes on to explain, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective," ([James 5:16](#)). If we want to stand firm in the way of following Jesus, then we need to be vulnerable and accountable with each other. "Vulnerable" means having a circle of believers where we can safely confess our sins to each other. "Accountable" includes a place where we pray for and encourage each other. It's where we can open up about things we struggle with, confident that we will receive love and help. All believers, new and seasoned, struggle with sin when life is easy and when it's rough. We need each other to stay the course, especially when we stumble and fall.

**TODAY:** There is strength in numbers. If you're not already in a small group, fill out an interest form [HERE](#). Our staff would love to connect you with a group that's a great fit for you. If you're in a small group already, consider how your group could be more vulnerable and accountable. Have a discussion with your group and then pray and see how God leads you.

Learn about this passage in this week's Beyond the Weekend podcast with Pastor Aaron Buer and other staff. Listen [HERE](#).

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Zechariah 4](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.

## Day 4 Psalm 13 | Pray

## How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Psalm 13:2

God invites people to come to him in their troubles and to pray ([James 5:13](#)). He wants to hear from us when we're hurting. God desires to hear how we truly feel and not just to ask him for solutions. A *lament* is an honest and painful prayer that states exactly how we feel. It's a prayer that says, "I'm not okay with this!" The Bible's spiritual "heavyweights" prayed these prayers, and so can we. They're necessary *and* spiritually healthy.

A lament includes three parts. (1) We turn to God with our *complaint*. We clearly state the things that grieve, confuse and upset us ([Psalm 13:1-2](#)). (2) We *request* God to move, see and answer. "Look on me and answer, Lord my God" ([Psalm 13:3](#)). (3) We place our *trust* in God. It doesn't mean we understand or like what is happening, but we trust God even though we don't see the resolution yet. "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation" ([Psalm 13:5](#)).

We can lament any situation that causes pain, grief or disappointment. Whether it's a lost opportunity where someone said "no" and a door didn't open, declining or struggling health for us or loved ones, or a broken or challenging relationship—God invites us to turn to him in it. We can bring our complaint, request and trust to him even when it's unresolved.

**TODAY:** If you are in a rough spot, use [Psalm 13](#) as a model to form a lament. Turn to God with your **complaint**, then **request** him to answer, and place your **trust** in him. Write out your lament in your journal or mobile device. Pray this as the situation comes to mind throughout the day.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Zechariah 5-6](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Notice the Branch imagery and what he will do.

## Day 5 James 1-5 | Make it Real

**In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.**  
James 2:17-18

James writes his letter to persecuted Christians to teach them how to live out their faith in challenging circumstances. With well-chosen words, he confronts Jesus's followers who know the truth but contradict the gospel with their lives. He urges believers, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" ([James 1:22](#)). A changed life that produces good deeds reveals a faith that is real.

This sermon series has been incredibly practical and hard-hitting. Pastor Aaron Buer says James gives a "gut punch" to our faith, especially concerning trials, religion, favoritism, works, words, desires, wealth and endurance. James confronts us head-on to look at our lives and consider how we live. Is there evidence in our words and actions that show we are sincere followers of Jesus? The challenge for us now is to put what we've heard into practice so we aren't just hearers of the word but also doers.

**TODAY:** Read or listen to the entire book of James. It takes about 15-20 minutes. Note or highlight things that stand out to you. Consider re-watching the sermons on these topics [HERE](#) and allow God to help you grow. Share with a friend or your small group something God has taught you.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Zechariah 7](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus.