

September 28/29, 2024

"The Verdict"

Pastor Jeff Manion



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

2024 Challenge: Finding Jesus in the Old Testament

September: Read Ezekiel to see how people, situations and events point to Jesus

Day 1 Matthew 9:18-26 | Restoration

After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. Matthew 9:25

Jesus is the restorer. It's a key theme of the section of Matthew's gospel we've been studying in the series *Is Jesus Worth Following?* Jesus restores a woman to health, a daughter to her father, sight to the blind and a man's ability to speak. Matthew shows that Jesus is on a mission of restoration. It's a picture of the ultimate restoration Jesus will bring when he comes again to make all things new ([Revelation 21:4-5](#)).

We can rely on Jesus's promise to make the world right. Our world is broken, including our souls. The world doesn't work the way it should. We feel the effects of this brokenness on a regular basis, both inside and outside of us. If the world is broken, understanding what can make it right is a significant part of life, something we should make sure we pay attention to. Throughout this series, we've been asking whether Jesus is worth following. If Jesus is the only one who can make things right, then this means Jesus *is* worth following. He's the one who can restore, and we can trust him. We see previews of this restoration in the gospels and can count on God's promise in Revelation that he will restore everything.

TODAY: Thank God for Jesus being the one who can restore. Thank God for how you've found restoration in your life and for how you've seen him work to restore the world around you. Ask God to continue to restore your soul. Offer yourself for God to use you to bring restoration to your relationships and the world.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezekiel 39-40](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Consider the vision of the new temple and how Jesus points to himself as the temple ([John 2:19-22](#)).

Day 2 Matthew 9:20-23 | How Long?

Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. Matthew 9:20

She's gone to all the doctors. She's spent lots of money. But her health keeps getting worse. Twelve years is a long time to suffer without answers. One failed remedy after the other eats into her financial resources. Yet, she still trusts God after twelve years of suffering and looks to Jesus.

Many of us can identify with the woman's plight in the story. We have endured something as draining, or we are currently doing so. Something that required us to seek many opinions, cost us our financial security, wrecked our mental health and may have gotten worse, not better. The Bible doesn't sugarcoat life. It's refreshingly honest. Life can be hard, and easy solutions are rare. One question asked in the book of Psalms is "How long?" ([Psalm 13:1-6](#)). It's likely a question we've asked God. How long will you let it go on? How long will I struggle with it?

How long will I have to see them hurting? We don't have to shy away from asking God this question. [Psalm 13](#) is a great example of taking struggles to God. It starts with the question and ends with trust. The author chooses to trust God even amid the struggle. It's a choice we can make, too.

TODAY: Open your journal and write "How Long?" at the top of the page. Reflect on what makes you ask God that question in this season. Honestly tell God how you feel about those circumstances and ask him to move in them. Then, write about trusting God. Ask him to help you trust him even more.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezekiel 41-42](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Observe the detailed temple measurements. Think about how Jesus fulfills the temple system ([Revelation 21:22](#)).

Day 3 Matthew 9:27-31 | Trust

When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. Matthew 9:28

Blind men hear about Jesus. They may have heard how he calmed the sea, cast out demons and healed a man who couldn't walk. They likely think if Jesus can do that, he can give us sight. It's almost too good to believe. They track Jesus down and begin shouting. They even follow him into a house. Then Jesus asks, "Do you believe?" They answer, "Yes," and Jesus heals them. Belief, or trust, is another theme in Matthew 9. Jesus calls out his disciples for their lack of trust, and he's amazed by a centurion's trust. Now, he focuses on the blind men's trust. Jesus wants people to believe who he is and trust him.

Jesus values our trust, too. Trust is based on knowing someone is trustworthy. Often, trust grows over time based on experience or reputation. Trusting God isn't any different. Our trust in God deepens as we grow our relationship with him. Jesus has authority over nature, sickness and evil forces, and he's the only one who can restore us to the life God designed for us. The more we immerse ourselves in God's Word and listen to his Spirit, the more our trust can grow. That's what God wants, for us to trust him. The God who came to earth and died on the cross is worth trusting.

TODAY: Return to the worship from the weekend service and join the Ada Bible worship team to sing "Hallelujah Through it All." Allow the lyrics to remind you that you can trust and worship God no matter what you face.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezekiel 43-44](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the return of God's glory to the temple. Consider how Jesus shows God's glory to his people ([Hebrews 1:1-3](#)).

Day 4 Isaiah 35:5-6 | Decision Point

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Isaiah 35:5

This year in *Beyond the Weekend*, we've been reading the Old Testament to look for Jesus. God tells a cohesive story throughout the Bible, pointing to Jesus's coming. Matthew makes a direct tie to the Old Testament. Isaiah says the Messiah will open blind eyes, unstop deaf ears and heal those who can't walk. The crowds likely realized *Jesus does those things*. They're trying to figure out who Jesus is, and all signs point to the promised Messiah. The religious elite, with their hard hearts, don't believe Jesus is the Messiah. They don't *want* to see what God is doing. They say that Jesus performs miracles with help from demons. They come to a decision point and dismiss Jesus. Instead of turning to him as Lord, they make him an enemy.

We all eventually come to a decision point regarding Jesus. John Dickson writes that most historians agree that Jesus's friends *and* enemies all believed something supernatural was happening (*A Doubter's Guide to Jesus*, 71).

The questions are: Who Jesus is, and is he worth following? We can either dismiss Jesus like the religious leaders did or choose to follow him. Jesus is either God or he isn't. That doesn't mean we may not have doubts from time to time; doubts are natural. But we have to make a decision. We need to answer the question, is Jesus worth following?

TODAY: Reflect on any doubts that keep you from following Jesus fully. Some people doubt if we can understand or trust the Bible. This fall, we're offering an Ada Bible Academy course on Understanding and Reading the Bible. This class will cover the fascinating history of our Bible and why we can trust it. [Click here](#) for more information and to register.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezekiel 45-46](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Look for descriptions of proper worship and leadership. Reflect on how Jesus reveals true worship and servant leadership ([John 13:13-15](#)).

Day 5 Matthew 9:35-36 | Good Shepherd

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36

Matthew gives two different points of view as these miracles conclude—amazement and compassion. Crowds witness Jesus's miracles and are amazed. Jesus looks at the crowds and has compassion. Matthew offers the reader a unique view into Jesus's heart. Jesus cares for the people and sees them like sheep without a shepherd. The religious and political leaders of Israel are failing the people. It's like a record on repeat for hundreds of years: corruption, incompetence, immorality and judgment. The leaders are supposed to call the people toward God. Instead, they create barriers between the people and God. Jesus sees this and has compassion. John records that Jesus says he wants to bring the people life to the full because he is the good shepherd ([John 10:10-11](#)).

A central theme of the Old Testament is Israel getting lost, wandering from thing to thing. They looked at the world around them for direction instead of God. They wanted what everyone else had and cast aside the God who created them and called them his own. We do the same. We wander, looking for significance, meaning, purpose or security. We look at what people around us are doing and think it'll lead to life. We're like sheep without a shepherd. That's why Jesus came. He came because he loves us and wants to offer us true life.

TODAY: Begin memorizing [John 10:10-11](#). Write it on a piece of paper, your mirror, your journal or the notes app on your phone. Work on memorizing it to remind yourself that life to the full is found in Jesus, not in anything else.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezekiel 47-48](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the river of life flowing from the temple. Consider how Jesus offers living water that gives eternal life ([John 4:10-14](#)).