

September 7/8, 2024  
"Decision at the Dock"  
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

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## **Day 1** Matthew 8-9 | Is Jesus Worth Following?

**"When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick."** Matthew 8:16

Jesus's miracles provide a window into the kingdom of God. In his kingdom, people are made whole, and lives are changed. Earlier in Matthew, Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God had come near ([Matthew 4:17](#)). He then teaches ([Matthew 5-7](#)) and heals ([Matthew 8-9](#)) as a demonstration of this reality. Reading Matthew's gospel leads us to ask: is Jesus worth following?

Following Jesus is an ongoing decision. We make the initial decision to trust Jesus for salvation, but this decision is not just a one-and-done choice. Every day, we face opportunities to trust Jesus further, walk in his way or go in our own direction (which is the way of sin and rebellion). We have the opportunity in our jobs, relationships, and discretionary time to faithfully follow Jesus or go our own way. The choice we make to follow Jesus impacts our everyday life.

**TODAY:** Begin the week with a prayer of openness to what God desires to reveal to you in this series. Jesus is worthy. But we may not always live like it. Ask for a heart that is open to how God wants you to grow this season. If you need a helpful prompt consider praying the words of [Psalm 139:23-24](#).

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezekiel 10-11](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Focus on the departure of God's glory from the temple. Reflect on how Jesus is the radiance of God's glory ([Hebrews 1:3](#)).

## **Day 2** Matthew 8:1-22 | Compassionate Touch

**"A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.' Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy."** Matthew 8:2-3

The work of the Son reveals the heart of the Father. One reason Jesus came was to reveal, in human form, what God is like. The healing miracles of people with various plights in Matthew 8 display the scandalous nature of God's compassion. He touches the untouchable. He heals an outsider. He casts out darkness. God does not look away from pain or misery.

God still draws near and cares for us in our deepest sorrows and struggles. He is near the brokenhearted ([Psalm 34:18](#)). God welcomes us with our desperate needs. The question is whether or not we believe he cares and has the power to address our pain. The works of Jesus reveal to us a God who is not simply moved by our pain but one who comes near with a powerful yet compassionate touch. He is the one who has both the concern and

authority to bring about meaningful change in our lives. We have a choice in our pain, whether to draw near, trust and follow him, or whether we will walk away.

**TODAY:** [1 Peter 5:7](#) says, “cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” The stories in Matthew 8 make evident that God cares for hurting and broken people. Take some time today to cast your cares upon God. What concerns you? What troubles you? Reflect upon these things and then speak with the One who cares.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezekiel 12-13](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the condemnation of false prophets. Consider how Jesus says he is the truth ([John 14:6](#)).

## Day 3 Matthew 8:17 | He is the One

**“This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.’”** Matthew 8:17

The prophet Isaiah lived roughly 700 years before the time of Jesus. Isaiah prophesied about a Savior to come who would not only be mistreated but “despised and rejected” ([Isaiah 53:3](#)). This long-awaited deliverer would give his life as a sacrifice for our salvation: “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” ([Isaiah 53:5](#)).

Matthew cites Isaiah’s prophesy he is proclaiming: Jesus is the one! Jesus is the long-awaited Savior. He is the one who brings deliverance and the one who satisfies our deepest and most ultimate longings. He is the only one who can carry the weight of our desires and greatest needs. He is the only one who can pay the price for our sin and restore us to God. He is the only way back to God and a restored life.

**TODAY:** Have you received Jesus as the one who gives life? The Bible teaches that sin has separated us from God. But Jesus came on a rescue mission to seek and save the lost. He lived a perfect life, died a sacrificial death on the cross, and rose victorious for our salvation—a gift that is available to all who turn from their sin and trust in Jesus. If you have never taken this step of faith today could be the day. If you have, take some time to celebrate by joining in worship with the Ada Bible worship team singing, “[There is a Savior](#).”

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezekiel 14-15](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Consider how Jerusalem is called a useless vine, but Jesus says he is the true vine ([John 15:1](#)).

## Day 4 Matthew 8:19-20 | Security

**“Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, ‘Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.’ Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’”** Matthew 8:19-20

After Jesus heals many people, his popularity begins to spread. Crowds follow him but don’t necessarily believe in him yet. One in the crowd is a teacher of the law who wants to journey with Jesus and his other disciples. However, this man was ill-prepared for the costs of following Jesus. Jesus’s warning to this man is that his ultimate security could no longer be in his occupation or location but must be in Jesus himself.

We all have false securities. Such counterfeit gods can come in the form of family, career, finances, reputation or comfort. When we place our trust and find our security in anything other than God, we have turned a good, God-given gift into a false god that robs us of ultimate trust in the one true God. This was true for this religious teacher and can often be true for us.

**TODAY:** Take some time to consider what your counterfeit gods may be. Where are you placing undue trust? Where are you seeking a false sense of security? God gives us many good gifts to receive and enjoy. But our ultimate trust must always be in him. Ask God to help you identify what the false gods in your life might be. Journal about what he reveals, and then ask God for forgiveness and grace to more fully trust him and his daily provision.

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezekiel 16-17](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Pay attention to the metaphors for God's relationship with Israel. Consider how Jesus fulfills the role of faithful bridegroom to his people ([Revelation 19:7](#)).

## Day 5 Matthew 8:21-22 | Allegiance

**“Another disciple said to him, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’”** Matthew 8:21-22

Jesus occasionally has some rather shocking words for those interested in following him. Here, a man approaches Jesus. Many scholars believe this man's father was still alive and that the man desired to uphold cultural and even biblical norms in caring for his father. Yet, Jesus's response indicates that allegiance to and affection for Jesus is to be of even greater priority than for one's own family.

Jesus was not saying that we should no longer care for or look after our parents or family members in need. Rather, Jesus makes a stunning claim: allegiance to him should be our ultimate priority. The point is that Jesus comes first. Where we spend our time and how we prioritize our lives is a window into our soul's affection and allegiance. Jesus says he is to be our first priority.

**TODAY:** It can be challenging to follow Jesus alone. We are meant to follow him in community with other believers. This is one of the benefits of belonging to a small group. A small group can be a powerful means of putting God first as you journey with like-minded Jesus followers. Groups for men, women, couples, single adults and young adults start soon. Learn more and sign up for a group [HERE](#).

**JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT:** Read [Ezekiel 18](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Focus on individual responsibility for sin. Reflect on how Jesus takes on the responsibility for our sins ([Hebrews 1:3](#)).