

September 14/15, 2024

"The Authority Figure"

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 8:23-9:9 | The Authority Figure

The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Matthew 8:27

Matthew recounts three stories that showcase Jesus's remarkable authority—calming a storm, confronting demons, healing a paralyzed man and forgiving his sins. These displays of power over nature, the spiritual realm, sickness and sin stun observers. They can't help but question Jesus's true identity. They wonder, who is this man that can command the weather, cast out evil spirits, heal sickness and forgive sins against God? Matthew intentionally links Jesus's authority with his identity. These weren't just impressive acts. They reveal Jesus as more than a gifted teacher, healer or prophet. Jesus acts with the very authority of God himself.

We can easily become numb to these familiar stories and lose sight of their profound meaning. However, recognizing Jesus's true identity and authority is crucial for our faith. When we grasp that Jesus is fully man *and* fully God, it reshapes how we relate to him. His commands carry ultimate weight. His promises are completely trustworthy. His love and grace take on infinite value. Jesus isn't just an inspiring figure from history. He's the Lord of all creation who invites us into a relationship with him. How we respond to his identity and authority is the most important decision we'll ever make.

TODAY: Reflect on how you may have become numb to Jesus's true identity and authority. Ask God to give you fresh eyes to see Jesus for who he truly is. Consider journaling about how embracing Jesus's divine identity and authority could impact your daily choices and priorities.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezekiel 19-20](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note God's recounting of Israel's rebellious history. Consider how Jesus comes to write a new history of obedience ([Romans 5:19](#)).

Day 2 Matthew 8:23-27 | The Storm

He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. Matthew 8:26

A violent storm threatens to capsize the disciples' boat while Jesus sleeps peacefully. Jesus's exhaustion reveals his human nature. Terrified and convinced they're about to drown, the disciples wake Jesus. His calm response highlights the disconnect between what they've witnessed of his power and their panicked reaction. They saw Jesus heal the sick and cast out demons. Yet, while faced with danger, fear overrode their budding faith. Jesus points out their lack of trust in him before effortlessly calming the storm.

We often face our own storms in the form of physical pain, grief, relational conflicts, societal issues, mental health battles or career challenges. Like the disciples, our natural response is often fear. Sometimes, we fixate on worst-case scenarios, allowing fear to rob us of peace and joy today. But Jesus calls us to a different way. He doesn't promise a storm-free life, but he promises his presence during turmoil. We can experience supernatural calm even in chaotic circumstances when we trust him. Faith doesn't mean denying real dangers. It means anchoring ourselves to the One who has authority over every storm, internal and external.

TODAY: Identify when fear and lack of trust in Jesus steals your joy or peace. Memorize [Philippians 4:6-7](#), "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." When anxious thoughts arise, recite this passage and give your fears to Jesus.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezekiel 21-22](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Look for images of God's sword of judgment. Think about how Jesus bears this judgment on the cross.

Day 3 Matthew 8:28-34 | The Confrontation

Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region. Matthew 8:34

Jesus encounters two demon-possessed men living among tombs. The men are so violent that people avoid the area entirely. The demons immediately recognize Jesus's authority and beg for mercy. Jesus casts the demons out with a word, freeing the men from torment. But the townspeople react badly. Instead of celebrating, they plead with Jesus to go away. It appears they fear Jesus's power and authority and don't want him to disrupt their lives.

We can often respond in a similar way. Jesus's authority challenges our habits and decision-making. We may want to tell Jesus to go away and stay out of our views on sexuality rather than seeking his Word. Or, we spend our money without thinking about his teachings on generosity. We may want to hold on to anger, unforgiveness or resentment rather than follow his teaching and forgive others as he forgives us. Sometimes, we want Jesus's blessings without full submission to his authority. But a partial commitment to Christ is ultimately no commitment at all. He calls us to yield every area of our lives to his good and perfect will. Resisting his authority robs us of the full, abundant life he offers ([John 10:10](#)).

TODAY: Prayerfully examine your life. Are you telling Jesus to go away? Share what God reveals with a trusted Christian friend or your small group leader, and discuss how you could invite Jesus into every part of your life. Maybe you've told Jesus to leave your schedule alone because you don't have time for community. Now is a great time to grow in community and accountability. Learn more about small groups and sign up [HERE](#).

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezekiel 23-24](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Observe the metaphors of unfaithfulness. Reflect on how Jesus remains forever faithful to His people ([Hebrews 13:8](#)).

Day 4 Matthew 9:1-8 | The Illness

"But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home." Matthew 9:6

Friends bring a paralyzed man to Jesus. They've likely heard stories of Jesus's healing miracles and hope the same for their friend. But Jesus addresses a deeper issue first, declaring the man's sins are forgiven. This shocks the religious leaders, who rightly understand that only God can forgive sins. To prove his divine identity and authority, Jesus heals the man's paralysis. The physical miracle validates Jesus's spiritual authority to reconcile people with God.

We often prioritize physical needs like health, finances or relationships. But Jesus cares about our physical *and* spiritual needs. He knows we need spiritual healing. Sin paralyzes us spiritually, alienating us from God and distorting our ability to love others and ourselves. Physical issues matter but are temporary, while forgiveness of sin is eternal. Faith in Jesus restores our relationship with God, sets us free to live as he created us and provides the way to spend eternity with God. Jesus came to earth to pay for our sins so we could be forgiven and reconciled with God. When we trust Christ's sacrifice on the cross, we receive complete forgiveness and a new identity as one of God's beloved children.

TODAY: Take time to thank God for his forgiveness through Jesus. If you've never received this gift, you can do so today. Consider talking to a Christian friend about how to experience God's forgiveness and new life in Christ, or email us at btw@adabible.org. Thank God for this gift by joining the Ada Bible Worship Team as they sing "[Bless God](#)."

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezekiel 25-26](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Note the judgments against the nations. Consider how Jesus will ultimately judge all nations ([Matthew 25:31-34](#)).

Day 5 Matthew 9:9 | The Decision

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. Matthew 9:9

Jesus encounters Matthew, a tax collector who is despised for collaborating with Rome and exploiting his own people. Jesus invites Matthew into a new life with two simple words: "Follow me." For Matthew, this means leaving behind his career, social connections and way of life. Following Jesus offered no guarantees of comfort or security. Yet Matthew had likely seen the miracles and heard of Jesus's authority. So, without hesitation, he rises and follows Jesus. Matthew chooses security in Jesus and affection for him over everything else.

Like Matthew, we face a daily choice to follow Jesus or go our own way. This decision affects every part of our lives, including our entertainment choices, who we date or marry, how we spend our free time and how we resolve conflict. Following Jesus means reorienting our entire lives around him and his kingdom's purposes. It's not just a one-time choice but a continual surrender of our will to his ([Matthew 6:9-10](#)). This path isn't always easy, but it leads to true fulfillment and eternal significance. Jesus doesn't promise a trouble-free life, but he does promise his constant presence and power through the Holy Spirit as we trust and follow him.

TODAY: Commit to taking a concrete step to follow Jesus more closely this fall. You could join a small group, establish a daily Bible reading habit or find a place to serve in the church or community. Choose one action and share your commitment with a friend for accountability.

JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: Read [Ezekiel 27-28](#). Highlight anything that points to Jesus. Pay attention to the fall of Tyre and its king. Think about how Jesus is over all worldly powers ([Ephesians 1:19-23](#)).