

More Stories About Jesus



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 3:25–36; John 1:32–36; John 6:51–71; John 5:36–38; John 7:37–53.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘And I am going to be lifted up from the earth. When I am, I will bring all people to myself’ ” (John 12:32, NirV).

JESUS said some things about Himself that surprised people. Jesus talked about who He was, about who sent Him, and about where He came from. Jesus also did miracles and signs to show who He was. John writes, “Many of the people believed in Jesus. They said, ‘When the Christ comes, will he do more miracles than this man has done?’ ” (John 7:31, ICB).

Jesus’ actions were proof that He meant what He said.

As Jesus’ story continues, the people could not agree if He was the Savior. When Jesus heals the man at the pool of Bethesda, some of the Jewish leaders get angry. After Jesus feeds more than 5,000 people, the Jews argue about Him in Capernaum. When they finish arguing, large crowds of Jewish people reject Jesus. Later, Jesus wakes up Lazarus from the dead. Some people believe in Jesus because of this miracle. But other people feel hatred for Jesus. This hatred will cause them to put Jesus on trial and punish Him with death on the cross.

This week, we will look at the stories of some of the people who were witnesses for Jesus. In each story, we can see parts of who Jesus really is. Together, these stories help us to see Jesus, the Savior, more clearly.



When Jesus heals the man at the pool of Bethesda, some of the Jewish leaders get angry.

**JOHN THE BAPTIST COMPARES HIMSELF TO JESUS
(John 3:25–36)**

Lesson 4 explained how John the Baptist’s announcement about Jesus brought the first followers to Jesus. These followers included Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. John the Baptist appears a few more times in the Book of John.

**How does John the Baptist compare himself to Jesus?
Read John 3:25–36 for the answer.**

John the Baptist’s followers argued with someone about laws for keeping clean. They may have been arguing about baptism (compare with Mark 1:4, 5). John’s followers asked John to help answer their question about Jesus. “Then they came to John and said, ‘Teacher, remember the man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan River? He is the one you were telling everyone about. He is also baptizing people, and many are going to him’ ” (John 3:26, ERV). We can easily see from this verse that John’s followers are jealous of Jesus.

John the Baptist doesn’t feel jealous. He knows the work that God gave him to do. John tells his followers to remember that he never said he was the Savior. God sent John to help people accept the Savior and to get their hearts ready for Him. John is only His witness (John 1:6–8).

Then John uses the word picture of a wedding to explain his work. John says that he is the friend of the bridegroom, and Jesus is the bridegroom. God’s people are the bride (compare with Hosea 2:16–23; Isaiah 62:1–5). Then John says something that shows he has no pride in his heart. With these words, we understand that John is an amazing person. He says, “ ‘He [Jesus] must become more important. I must become less important’ ” (John 3:30, NLV).

John 3:31–36 continues to compare John with Jesus. These verses show that the Savior is more important than John. John’s message helps people to accept Jesus and His everlasting life. God is “very angry” with the people who refuse to accept Jesus (John 3:36, WE). That’s what the verse says. God loves the earth and sends His Son to save the people on this earth (John 3:16, 17). But if people refuse to accept God’s gift of mercy, God will let them pay the penalty for their own sins. The penalty is everlasting death. Jesus pays the penalty only for the people who accept Him.



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A NEW UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE SAVIOR (John 1:32–36)

As a people, the Jews waited for the Savior for a long time. What does John the Baptist say about Jesus that surprised the people and that they didn't expect to hear? Read John 1:32–36 for the answer.



The name the “Lamb of God” connected Jesus to His future death as an offering for sin.

The Jews expected the coming Savior to make them free from Roman control. The Kingdom of Rome controlled the Jews for a long time. The Jews believed that the coming Savior would end Rome's control. Then Israel can become an important and powerful country again. But then John the Baptist named Jesus “the Lamb of God” (John 1:36, ERV). This name connected Jesus to His future death as an offering for sin. Most people misunderstood John's words about Jesus. They didn't really know what John the Baptist was talking about at all.

So, John, Jesus' follower, wrote this book about Jesus' life. John wanted to help people have a correct understanding of Jesus. Then they would know that Jesus was the Savior. Jesus did everything the Bible said the Savior would do. Jesus wasn't coming as a king or an army leader. Jesus came to offer Himself for the sins of everyone. When Jesus finishes His work, then God's kingdom will come (read Daniel 7:18).

“When Jesus was baptized, John the Baptist announced that Jesus was the Lamb of God. John's words helped people understand the Savior's work in a new way. The Holy Spirit helped John the Baptist remember Isaiah's words, ‘He was led away like a lamb to be killed.’ Isaiah 53:7 [NIRV].” —Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 136, adapted.

John the Baptist said that when he first met Jesus, “‘I did not know who he was’ ” (John 1:31, ERV). So, then, how did John know that Jesus was the Savior? The answer is that God told John: “‘God said to me, “The Holy Spirit will come down and stay on Him. He is the One Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” I saw this happen. I am now saying that Jesus is the Son of God’ ” (John 1:33, 34, NLV). So, in other words, God showed John that Jesus was the Savior.

“But Christ is God's power and wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:24, ERV). God helps us to know that Jesus is the Savior. We see this idea often in the Book of John. Only God saves us when we give our hearts to Jesus in faith and obey Him.

ACCEPTING OR REJECTING JESUS (John 6:51–71)

Lesson 2 talked about the time Jesus fed more than 5,000 people (John 6). But the lesson didn't talk about the final part of the story, which we will look at here.

What did Jesus say that people had trouble accepting? Read John 6:51–71 for the answer.

After Jesus worked a miracle to feed more than 5,000 people, they were ready to make Jesus king (John 6:1–15). Later, at the Jewish church in Capernaum, Jesus explained the spiritual meaning of the miracle to the people. Jesus said, “ ‘I am the bread that gives life’ ” (John 6:35, ERV). Jesus explains that this bread is a word picture for His body. Jesus will give His body as an offering for sin so that the people of this earth can have everlasting life (John 6:51).

Jesus' saying helped the people understand that Jesus wasn't going to be their king. But the people refused to accept what Jesus told them. Many of His followers left Him at this time (John 6:66).

Their leaving must have hurt Jesus. Everyone wants to be liked. When Jesus sees so many people leave Him, He asks His Twelve followers if they want to leave Him, too.

At this time, Peter makes an amazing announcement about who Jesus is and what He has to give. “Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, who else can we go to? You have words that give life that lasts forever. We believe and know You are the Christ [the Savior]. You are the Son of the Living God’ ” (John 6:68, 69, NLV).

Jesus' followers had been with Him for about two years. They traveled with Him. They saw Him do miracles. They heard His sermons. The followers knew from experience that there was no one else the same as Jesus. The followers believed that Jesus was the Savior, even if they didn't understand what He came to do. Only when Jesus died and woke up from the dead did the followers start to understand why Jesus came to earth.

What does this story in John 6:51–71 teach us about how big groups of people are often wrong about things? Why must we remember this important idea when we share with other people those parts of our faith that many people, and even some Christians, do not like?



Jesus explains that this bread is a word picture for His body.

GOD THE FATHER SAYS WHO JESUS IS (John 5:36–38)

The Book of John starts with the topic about the Word (“logos” in the Greek language), who is Jesus. John tells us that the Word is with God the Father (John 1:1). Then the Word comes to live in a human body on earth. At that time, the Holy Spirit says who Jesus is. The Spirit rests on Jesus at His baptism (John 1:32–34). Later, God the Father also tells us who Jesus is during Jesus’ work on earth.

Read John 5:36–38. What does Jesus say in these verses about God the Father?

Jesus connects God the Father to the works and miracles He did on this earth. Jesus says that the Father sent Him. The Father also is a witness about who Jesus is and what He came to do.

What does God the Father say about Jesus? Read Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:11; and Luke 3:22 (also read 2 Peter 1:17, 18).



The Spirit rests on Jesus at His baptism (John 1:32–34).

During Jesus’ baptism, God the Father and the Holy Spirit join Jesus at this important time. Jesus’ work on earth is about to start. The Father says that Jesus is His beloved Son. God is very pleased with Him. Later, God makes another announcement at an important time during Jesus’ work on earth. We can read about this time in John 12.

In chapter 12, John tells us that at this time Jesus is almost done with His work on earth. The Jewish leaders couldn’t stop Jesus in His work (read John 12:19). So, now more than ever, the Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus. The crowds love Jesus. More and more people heard the stories of the witnesses who saw Jesus wake up Lazarus from the dead (John 12:17, 18). So, more people started to follow Jesus. The Greeks who came to Jerusalem for the feast also wanted to meet Jesus.

The Father again speaks to Jesus from heaven. God the Father answers Jesus’ words in John 12:28. Jesus says, “‘Father, honor Your name!’ Then a voice from heaven came, saying, ‘I have already honored My name. I will honor it again!’ ” (NLV).

As we saw already, Jesus will be honored on the cross. So, the Father’s announcement in John 12:28 is talking about Jesus’ offering as the Lamb of God for our sins.

THE CROWD ANNOUNCES WHO JESUS IS (John 7:37–53)

“The last day of the feast came. It was the most important day. On that day Jesus stood up and said in a loud voice, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. If a person believes in me, rivers of living water will flow out from his heart. This is what the Scripture [the Bible] says’ ” (John 7:37, 38, ICB).

Many times John writes the announcements that Jesus makes about Himself. Jesus says who He was and what He came to do. The verses from John 7:37, 38 are another example of an announcement Jesus makes about Himself. Jesus promises to do wonderful things for people who believe in Him. This promise is amazing.

When Jesus talked to the Jews at the feast, how did many people in the crowd answer Him? Read John 7:37–53 for the answer.

Some people in the crowd said that Jesus was the Special Messenger that Moses said would come (read Deuteronomy 18:15–19). Other people thought that Jesus was the Savior. But this belief caused some Jews to argue about where the Savior would come from. They said that the Savior wouldn’t come from Galilee. They also said that the Savior must be born from David’s line. So, the Savior had to be born in Bethlehem. All these things were true about Jesus (compare with Matthew 1–2). But many people didn’t know these things!

The soldiers who came to arrest Jesus were also surprised at the things He said. The Jewish religious leaders answered the soldiers with another question. “ ‘You don’t see any of the leaders or any of us Pharisees believing in him, do you?’ ” (John 7:48, ERV). Then the Book of John tells us that Nicodemus tries to protect Jesus from the evil plans of the Jewish leaders. Nicodemus says, “ ‘Our law does not judge a man without hearing him. We cannot judge him until we know what he has done’ ” (John 7:51, ICB). Did Nicodemus accept Jesus as the Savior? The verse we just read isn’t proof that Nicodemus did. But between this story and what Nicodemus did after Jesus died (read John 19:39, 40), the Bible gives us proof that Nicodemus did come to believe in Him. So, the answer to the Pharisees’ question was, “Yes,” one of the spiritual leaders did believe Jesus!



“ ‘If a person believes in me, rivers of living water will flow out from his heart.’ ”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Crisis in Galilee,” pages 383–394; “In the Outer Court,” pages 621–626, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“ ‘Lord, who else can we go to?’ [John 6:68, NLV]. The Jewish teachers were the same as slaves to wrong ideas about God. The Pharisees and Sadducees were two groups of spiritual leaders. They were always fighting with each other. If people did not want to follow Jesus, the only other teachers were the Pharisees or Sadducees. These men wanted the honor that belonged only to God. These men loved empty worship. When Jesus’ followers accepted Him, they found more peace and joy than they knew before in their old lives. How could they go back to the teachers who scolded and attacked the Friend of sinners? Jesus’ followers waited for the Savior to come for a long time. They couldn’t turn away from Him to the teachers who wanted to kill Him. These same spiritual leaders attacked the followers for accepting Jesus.

“ ‘Lord, who else can we go to?’ The followers couldn’t reject Jesus’ precious teachings or His lessons about love and mercy for lies and a life of sin. Many people rejected Jesus. These same people saw the wonderful works and miracles that Jesus did. But Peter announced the faith of Jesus’ followers: ‘You are the Savior.’ The followers were filled with fear and pain at the thought of losing Jesus. Jesus was the same as a ship’s anchor. If the followers rejected Jesus, they felt they would be the same as a ship with no anchor that was drifting on a dark and stormy sea.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 393, adapted.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Some people accepted Jesus as the Savior, while other people rejected Him. Both groups saw the same proof for Jesus as Savior. Why did some people accept the proof while other people rejected it?
- ② Jesus died for our sins. How do we know this important Bible truth? Did science teach us? Why must the Bible have the final say in everything we believe?

“WE DIDN’T SEND ANYONE”

For four years, Donaldo Velasquez visited a Colombian prison every Friday morning to preach about Jesus. But one Friday, Donaldo couldn't go. Donaldo worked as a carpenter. One of his customers needed his help. Donaldo also badly needed the money.

Only four Seventh-day Adventists had permission to visit the prison in Acacias. They were Donaldo, Ranses, Pedro, and the pastor. Donaldo called them on the phone for help. Ranses said, “No, I’m too busy.” Pedro also said he couldn't go. The pastor apologized, saying he was out of town.

Donaldo cried and prayed. When his wife, Jesusita, asked Donaldo what was wrong, he said that he didn't want to miss the meeting with the prisoners. But he needed to work. Jesusita said, “Go, do your job. God will provide for the prisoners.”

The next time Donaldo visited the prison, 38 inmates came to hear him preach. Pedro went to the prison with Donaldo.

One prisoner asked, “Where is the man who came to preach to us the last time?”

Donaldo answered, “We didn't send anyone.”

Another prisoner said, “Yes, you did. A man preached to us.”

Donaldo said, “No, we didn't send anyone.” He thought that maybe the man who preached was from a different church.

The prisoners said, “No, no. We know everyone who is allowed to visit us. This man never visited us before. He wasn't from a different church.”

Donaldo asked about the man's sermon. The prisoners said the man talked about the seventh-day Sabbath.

The prisoners told Donaldo that the man was tall and wore nice clothes, including a white shirt. The prisoners said the man knew the Bible so well that they thought he must be a teacher.

Pedro touched Donaldo's arm. Pedro said, “An angel must have come and preached to them.”

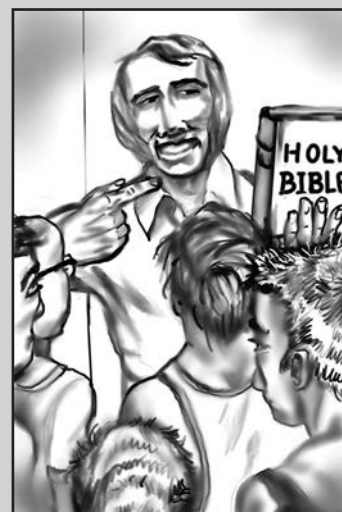
Donaldo wasn't convinced. He went to the prison guard. The guard was a friend of Donaldo's. The guard checked the computer records of visitors to the prison. Then the guard shook his head. He said, “No one visited the prison that day.”

Donaldo was amazed. He said, “Now I know the Lord sent an angel to teach the Bible that day.”

Donaldo went back to the prisoners. He told them they saw an angel for sure. Six years later, almost all 38 prisoners gave their hearts to Jesus and were baptized. Donaldo said he will always remember that day. He says, “Yes, the story is amazing. But I believe God sent His angel that day.” Thank you for your 13th Sabbath Offering that helped God's work in Colombia last quarter.

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Donaldo believes that God sent His angel that day.



Donaldo Velasquez