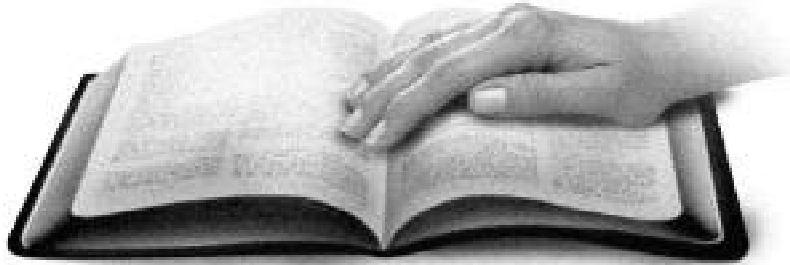


# The Special Reason for John's Book



SABBATH—DECEMBER 27

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Luke 1:1-4; John 15:1-8; John 17:20; John 20:24-31; John 21:20-25.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Then Jesus told him [Thomas], ‘Because you have seen me [Jesus], you [Thomas] have believed; blessed are those [people] who have not seen and yet have believed’ ” (John 20:29, NIV).

**IMPORTANT THOUGHT:** The book of John tells us that it is not necessary for Jesus to be with us in person if we wish to have a relationship with Him. Jesus' word is as powerful as His touch.

**HAVE YOU EVER WISHED YOU COULD HAVE KNOWN JESUS AS HIS DISCIPLES DID?** Have you ever wished He lived at your house? Would it not be great to talk your problems over with Him? To go to Him and share what is on your heart and then see Him go to His knees and pray to His Father for you? Would it not be easier to have a relationship with Jesus if He lived, breathed, walked, and talked at your house?

Unfortunately, we do not have this honor. But the good news is that the book of John tells us that we do not need to touch Jesus physically to have a relationship with Him. We do not need to meet Him in person to get all the blessings He is willing and able to give. John even remembers Jesus telling His disciples, “ ‘It is for your good that I am going away’ ” (John 16:7, NIV). With the Holy Spirit's help, Jesus can do greater work than if He lived at your house (John 14:12). This week we will take our first look at this good news.

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 3.

SUNDAY—DECEMBER 28

**HOW THE GOSPELS<sup>1</sup> WERE WRITTEN  
(Luke 1:1-4).**

**Were the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John the only stories of Jesus' life ever written? Luke 1:1.**

**How did Luke's book and John's book come about? Luke 1:2, 3.**

Luke tells us that “many” individuals (persons) had already tried to tell Jesus' story. The stories about Jesus and His sayings were remembered and handed down by “eyewitnesses and servants of the word” (Luke 1:2, NIV). The word *servants* here means professional memorizers in the old world who would keep a record of important sayings in their minds for future use. We should not be surprised that such individuals might be hired to memorize Jesus' sermons, parables,<sup>2</sup> and actions. Later, they would repeat from memory what Jesus had said and done.

Jesus' stories and sayings were passed along by word of mouth for many years after He went to heaven. With the Holy Spirit's leading, Luke talked with eyewitnesses and people who had memorized Jesus' sayings and actions. Luke then chose those sayings and actions that helped him

put together a good story of Jesus' life and teachings. The final result is the Gospel of Luke.



**Do you memorize parts of the Bible? Why should we memorize Bible verses?**

**What does John 21:25 tell us about the limits of all the Gospels?**

John's point is that most of Jesus' story could not be put in his Gospel. Each of the four Gospels offers parts of Jesus' sayings and actions that the writer knew best. “It is rare that two persons will see and teach truth in the very same way. Each person gives points which his environment, education, and experiences influence him to choose to write about.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 22.

<sup>1</sup>Gospels—the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The gospel is the good news of salvation.

<sup>2</sup>parables—short fiction (did not really happen) stories that teach a truth. For example, read Luke 15:8-10. This story did not really happen. But Jesus told this story to teach us about the joy of salvation.

**What does the above quote from Ellen G. White tell us about how we should treat other people who might understand truth differently from us?**



Everyone sees a different part of what happens. That is why we have four Gospels in the Bible.

MONDAY—DECEMBER 29

### MAKING CHOICES WITH A PURPOSE (John 20:30, 31).

**Why did John say he wrote what he did about the life of Jesus? John 20:30, 31. In what ways does the whole Bible show this same purpose?**

Jesus worked for three and a half years (1,260 days) from His baptism to the time He went to heaven. Out of all the things Jesus said and did during that time, John writes about events<sup>3</sup> that happened on a total of only 29 days. These events cover only a small part of what Jesus may have said and done on those days. More than 97 percent of Jesus' ministry (work) is left out of John's Gospel. With the Holy Spirit's help, John had to choose what was important to fulfill his purpose. His purpose was to get us to believe in Jesus so we could have eternal<sup>4</sup> life.

Notice for whom John wrote his Gospel. The word *you* means many of John's readers, or many of us. John wrote so that *you* might believe and that *you* might have life. With the word *you*, John was thinking of his readers. But which readers? All of them? Or was there a special group of people?

**What story leads to John's statement of purpose? John 20:24-28.**

Thomas clearly felt that his faith depended on seeing Jesus in person. Once Thomas had seen Jesus, he had no problem believing. In John 20:24-31, Thomas represents all Jesus' disciples who had seen Jesus in person.

Jesus' statement in John 20:29 shows that there is a special blessing

<sup>3</sup>events—things that happened.

<sup>4</sup>eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

for people who believe in Him without seeing Him. Seeing Jesus in person is not important to having faith in Him. John 20:29 is a blessing for people like us who cannot physically be with Jesus, but who believe in Him anyway.

**How does 2 Corinthians 4:18 help us understand today's lesson?**

**TUESDAY—DECEMBER 30**

**THE OCCASION OF THE GOSPEL  
(John 21).**

According to John 21, Jesus faced Peter with three sets of questions and answers. This is because Peter had denied Jesus three times in the high priest's courtyard a short while before (John 21:15-19). Jesus knew Peter needed to work through his sense of guilt and failure for denying Jesus. Jesus' challenge also gave the other disciples the chance to once again have confidence in Peter. Later, as Jesus and Peter were walking along the beach, something happened that might have had a large influence on John.

**Who did Peter notice was following him and Jesus along the beach? John 21:20, 24. Also read John 13:23-25.**

**What did Peter ask Jesus about that disciple? John 21:21.**

Jesus had just explained to Peter how Peter would one day die. Peter was curious whether his experience would be almost the same as John's experience (John 21:24). Jesus avoided the question with a mysterious answer: "If I [Jesus] should choose John to remain alive until I come, why is this your [Peter's] business?"

People did not understand Jesus' answer in the years that followed. People wrongly believed that the beloved disciple, John, would live to see Jesus' second coming. As disciple after disciple died, many people became excited about the "nearness" of Jesus' return. As John entered old age and began to face death, many people began to lose faith. Would John's death make Jesus appear to be a false prophet? Did Jesus not say that John would be alive at His return?

Some people believe that at this important moment the church faced a crisis. But God influenced John to leave another written book. This one would correct the false rumor about the time between John's death and the Second Coming. John's Gospel would give what the next group of Christians needed to accept his death. His Gospel would teach us all how to have a living relationship with Jesus, whom we cannot see, hear, or touch.

**Read again what Jesus told Peter in John 21:22. Jesus never said that John would not die. How are we in danger of trying to interpret the Bible the wrong way?**

WEDNESDAY—DECEMBER 31

## SECOND GENERATION OF CHRISTIANS<sup>5</sup> (John 1:40-42).

In many different ways, the Gospel of John shows an interest in the second generation of Christians.

In John's Gospel, the disciples do not meet because Jesus calls them. Instead, they meet through the invitation of someone else who knows Jesus. This perhaps symbolizes how most of the world will come to first know Jesus. People will first come to Jesus not by knowing Him in person, but through the witness<sup>6</sup> of a Christian.

**How do the following verses show the idea that we do not have to see Jesus in person to first learn about Him?**

John 1:40-42 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

John 13:20 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Today people learn about Jesus through the witness of other people. Other people first tell them about Jesus and then "lead" them to Him. How important it is for us as followers of Jesus to be prepared to lead other people to the Savior!



**"We have found the Messiah"  
(John 1:41, TEV).**

In John 17, Jesus prays for Himself first. Then He prays for His disciples (John 17:1-19). After this, He prays for people who would become Christians after He went back to heaven. Jesus' prayer is not for His disciples alone but for "those [people] who will believe in me [Jesus] through their [the disciples'] message" (John 17:20, NIV). Most people throughout history have developed a relationship with Jesus without knowing Him in person. They have done so by reading the writings of people who knew Him in person. Jesus prayed that the written Word (the Bible) would be the method of uniting all believers, both believers who had seen Him and believers who had not seen Him (John 17:21-23).

**Read Jesus' prayer in John 17. What are the key (important) points of His prayer? Write a summary of what Jesus wanted for His followers.**

<sup>5</sup>second generation of Christians—Christians who were not living before Jesus was crucified.

<sup>6</sup>witness—the actions and words of a Christian.

**What message is in Jesus' prayer for us too?**

**THURSDAY—JANUARY 1**

**HIS WORD IS AS GOOD AS HIS TOUCH (John 4:46-54).**

According to Luke 4:40, what did Jesus do every time He healed people? (Read Matthew 9:29, 30; Matthew 20:34; Mark 1:29-31; Mark 9:25-27; Luke 7:14, 15; Luke 13:13 for additional examples.)

**How did Jesus do His miracles in the Gospel of John? John 4:46-54. (Read also John 2:1-11; John 5:1-15; and John 11:1-44 for additional examples.)**

Jesus uses touch in about half the miracles written in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In John's Gospel, Jesus does not use touch much to do His miracles.

Why the difference?

Perhaps the Holy Spirit influenced John to choose stories that do not show much touching in the healing process. This is shown very clearly in John 4:46-54 where Jesus is 16 miles away from the person He heals! This helps us understand that a person does not need to see Jesus in person to be blessed or healed by Him. These stories about healing without touching show John's theme that Jesus' word is as good as His touch. This is very good news for people, such as us, who can have the hope that even

though we cannot see Jesus in person, He can still be close to us in all our troubles, sorrows, and joys. Through these stories, John shows us that heaven is closer to earth than we might think.

**Most miracles in the Gospel of John were a result of Jesus' words instead of His touch. List the command word Jesus used in each of the following stories: John 2:7; John 4:50; John 5:8; John 9:7; John 11:43.**

These scenes show the power of Jesus' words to overcome space. Distance is no problem for Him who created the universe. Jesus' word is as powerful nearby as it is at a distance. We learn about Jesus and His work on the printed page. But we do know that the Bible still has the power to save and heal. It is through the Bible that Jesus works on the needs of later generations of Christians.

**Instead of having Jesus on earth, we have His Word, the Bible. Why is studying the Word so important to having a close relationship with Him?**



**Studying God's Word helps us to know Jesus even though we cannot see Him.**

## FRIDAY—JANUARY 2

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Note Ellen G. White's comments on how the Bible was written in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 15–23.

About faith in Jesus' word versus faith in what we can see and touch, Ellen G. White made this comment about John 4:46-54: "The nobleman wanted to see how his prayer would be fulfilled before he would believe. But he had to first accept the word of Jesus that He heard his prayer and would give him the blessing. We also are to believe not because we see or feel that God hears us. Instead, we are to trust in His promises."—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 200.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:18 and Hebrews 11:1. Why must our greatest hope be in things we do not see? Is

there anything we now can see that will last forever?

2. How could different writers picture Jesus from different viewpoints? Do these different viewpoints make you more or less likely to accept their stories? Explain. What would we think if all stories about Jesus said the same thing?
3. What does the main point of this week's lesson tell us about how important witnessing<sup>7</sup> is to the mission of the church?

**SUMMARY:** We often struggle about having a living relationship with Jesus, whom we cannot see, hear, or touch. We imagine that faith came more easily to people who walked and talked with Jesus. But the Gospel of John shows us that Jesus' word is as powerful as His touch. Through the Holy Spirit and the Bible, we may know Jesus more closely than the disciples did.

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<sup>7</sup>witnessing—teaching people about God and living a Christian life.