

# More Testimonies About Jesus



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *John 3:25–36, John 1:32–36, Dan. 7:18, John 6:51–71, John 5:36–38, John 7:37–53.*

**Memory Text:** “ ‘And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself’ ” (*John 12:32, NKJV*).

Jesus doesn't merely say astonishing things about Himself or about who He is or about who sent Him or about where He came from. He also *showed* who He is by the miracles and signs that He performed. As some openly testify of Jesus: “ ‘When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?’ ” (*John 7:31, NKJV*).

He backed up His words with actions that proved the truth of His words.

But as the drama continues, a division begins among the people. The healing of the man by the pool of Bethesda attracts the ire of some leaders. The discussion in Capernaum following the feeding of the 5,000 results in the rejection of Jesus by the multitudes. The resurrection of Lazarus creates faith in some but triggers in others a hostility that will lead to the trial and execution of Jesus.

This week's lesson looks at some of those who witnessed and testified about Jesus. In each of these incidents, some aspects of who Jesus really is are revealed, and together they create a deeper vision of Jesus, the Messiah.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 9.

## Humility of Soul: John the Baptist Testifies Again

Lesson 2 described how the witness of John the Baptist brought the first disciples—Andrew and John, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel—to Jesus. One would expect that the Baptist, having given his witness, would move off the scene. But he reappears several times in the Gospel of John.

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

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A dispute arose between John the Baptist’s disciples and an unnamed Jew about purification, likely a question over the efficacy of baptism (*compare with Mark 1:4, 5*). Interestingly, when his disciples come to John, no doubt to resolve the question, they bring up Jesus, saying, “He is baptizing, and all are going to him” (*John 3:26, ESV*). It is not hard to read between the lines: they are jealous of Jesus—jealous for *their* master and jealous for themselves, as well.

It would be all too easy for John to indulge in the jealousy, but he does not because he knows what his mission is. Instead, he reminds his disciples that he never claimed to be the Christ. On the contrary: he came to point toward Him, to prepare the way for Him, to be a witness about Him (*John 1:6–8*).

Using the illustration of a wedding, he calls himself the *friend of the bridegroom*, with Jesus as the *bridegroom*. The *bride* would be the people of God (*compare with Hos. 2:16–23 and Isa. 62:1–5*). Then, in words that show John’s true greatness, he says, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (*John 3:30*).

John 3:31–36 continues the comparison between Jesus and John, showing the superiority of the Messiah over His forerunner. With John’s testimony pointing toward Jesus, the idea of witness is again emphasized. Those who receive that testimony and believe in Jesus have eternal life. Those who do not receive Him remain under the wrath of God. That’s what the text says. God loves the world and sent His Son to redeem the world (*John 3:16, 17*). But those who refuse the gift offered them will have to pay the penalty for their own sins—eternal death.

**How can we learn the lesson of humility before both God and humanity? What can we learn from the example of John here about humility of the soul?**

## A New Understanding of the Messiah

**Read** John 1:32–36. What does John the Baptist say here about Jesus that the people were not expecting about the long-awaited Messiah?

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The Jews looked for a Messiah to come who would deliver them from the rule of Rome. Long under oppression, the Jews believed that the Messiah would not only overthrow Rome but would establish them as a great and powerful nation. John's words, however, calling Jesus "the Lamb of God," although directly pointing to His atoning sacrifice, were probably misunderstood by the majority of people. They might have not known what he was talking about at all.

Thus, John with his Gospel wanted to change their understanding of the Messiah so that they could recognize in Jesus the fulfillment of the prophecies regarding the coming King and what He would do. He was not coming as a political and military leader but to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. That was His purpose. Only after that, when all is finished, will the final kingdom come (*see Dan. 7:18*).

"When at the baptism of Jesus, John pointed to Him as the Lamb of God, a new light was shed upon the Messiah's work. The prophet's mind was directed to the words of Isaiah, 'He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.' Isa. 53:7."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 136.

In John 1:31, John says " 'I did not know Him' " (*NKJV*). So, how then did John come to know Jesus as the Messiah? The answer is that the Lord who sent John had previously said to him, " 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' " And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God' " (*John 1:33, 34, NKJV*). In other words, God revealed to John that Jesus was the Messiah.

"Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God" (*1 Cor. 1:24, NKJV*). Knowledge that Jesus is the Christ comes from God Himself through the convicting power of His Spirit. This theme appears frequently in John. Salvation does not come from worldly philosophy, science, or higher learning. It comes only from God to a heart surrendered in faith and obedience to Jesus.

**How would we know the truth about Jesus as our atoning sacrifice unless it were revealed to us? Why, then, is knowing the Bible and what it teaches about Jesus so crucial?**

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## Acceptance and Rejection

Lesson 2 described the feeding of the 5,000 in John 6 but did not cover the final section of that story, which is studied here.

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

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Having just been fed, miraculously, by Jesus, the people were ready to crown Him king (*John 6:1–15*). But in talking with them later at the Capernaum synagogue, He explains the spiritual meaning of the miracle, saying, “I am the bread of life,” (*John 6:35*). He expounds in more detail that this bread is His flesh, which He gives for the life of the world (*John 6:51*).

This saying opened the eyes of the multitude to the fact that Jesus would not be their earthly king. He did not fit the mold produced by earthly thinking. They refused conversion, which would transform the way they thought so that they could recognize and accept Jesus as the Messiah. Many of His disciples left Him at this point (*John 6:66*).

From a human sense, this must have been hard for Jesus. The approbation of the crowd is pleasing. Who doesn’t want to be liked? But seeing many people draw back and question one’s principles is naturally discouraging, as well. Seeing the multitude depart, Jesus asks his inner circle, the Twelve, if they want to leave, too.

This is when Peter makes his amazing confession, another witness as to both what Jesus has and who He is. “ ‘You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God’ ” (*John 6:68, 69, ESV*).

The disciples had been with Jesus for a couple of years, traveling with Him, seeing His miracles, hearing His sermons. They knew from experience that there was no one comparable to Him. The conviction settled upon them that, however unusual some situations might be, this man was the Messiah—regardless of how much they still didn’t understand about His purpose for coming. Only after His death and resurrection did they start to understand why Jesus came.

**What can we learn from this story about the fact that the majority is usually wrong? Why must we remember this, especially with the aspects of our faith that are unpopular with the majority—even the majority of Christians?**

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## The Witness of the Father

The Gospel of John begins by talking about the *Word (logos)* as being *with God*; that is, being with God the Father (John 1:1). When the Word became flesh, the Spirit testified about Jesus by resting on Him at His baptism (John 1:32–34). But the Father also testifies about Jesus during His earthly ministry.

**Read John 5:36–38. What does Jesus say here about the Father?**

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Jesus links the Father to the works and miracles that He had performed. He is very clear that the Father had sent Him and also had testified about Him.

**Read Matthew 3:17, Matthew 17:5, Mark 1:11, and Luke 3:22** (see also 2 Pet. 1:17, 18). **What does the Father say about Jesus?**

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At the baptism of Jesus, the Father and the Spirit joined the Son in marking this important occasion: the commencement of Jesus' ministry. The Father states that Jesus is His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. But, at a crucial time in Christ's ministry, the Father speaks yet again, this time as recorded in the Gospel of John.

Things were reaching a climax in the final days of that ministry. The religious leaders, unable to stop Him (see John 12:19), wanted Him dead, now more than ever. The crowds were exuberant over Him, especially as more and more people, hearing the testimony of those who saw Him raise Lazarus from the dead (John 12:17, 18), were starting to follow Jesus. Even Greeks, there for the festival, wanted to see Jesus.

At this point, in response to Jesus' words in John 12:28, "Father, glorify Your name" (NKJV), the Father again speaks from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (John 12:28, ESV).

As we have already seen, Jesus' hour of glory is the cross. Thus, the Father's testimony about Jesus points to the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God for the sins of the world. It is the culmination of His earthly ministry. His death in our behalf paid the full penalty for all our sins, and in Him, by faith, we never have to face that penalty ourselves.

## The Witness of the Crowd

“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’ ” (*John 7:37, 38, NKJV*).

John recorded, numerous times, Jesus making bold statements about Himself, about who He was and what He came to do.

The lines quoted above from John 7:37, 38 are another example of what Jesus claimed about Himself and about what He would do to all who come to Him. These were astonishing claims, as well.

**When Jesus spoke to the Jews attending the Feast of Tabernacles, what was the response of many in the crowd?** (*See John 7:37–53.*)

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Some said He was the Prophet like Moses predicted long ago (*see Deut. 18:15–19*). Others thought Jesus was the Christ. But this brought the argument that the Messiah would not come from Galilee, that He had to be of the Davidic line, and that He had to be born in Bethlehem—all of which were true about Jesus (*compare with Matthew 1–2*), though many did not seem to know this!

Even the arresting officers were stymied by Him and the eloquence of His words. The Pharisees responded to the officers with another question. “ ‘Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?’ ” (*John 7:48, NKJV*). This question from the Pharisees gave John the opportunity again to bring in Nicodemus, who, after having had his meeting with Jesus, was seeking to protect Jesus from their machinations. “ ‘Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?’ ” (*John 7:51, NKJV*).

Did Nicodemus ever accept Jesus as the Messiah? Though this scene does not prove that he had, between this act and what he did after Jesus died (*see John 19:39, 40*), the Bible gives us solid evidence that Nicodemus did in fact come to believe in Him.

And so, the answer to their question was, yes, in fact, one of the Pharisees did believe in Him, after all.

**Read John 7:49. What were the leaders saying that showed their disdain for the masses who followed after Jesus? What lesson might be here for us?**

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

“ ‘To whom shall we go?’ The teachers of Israel were slaves to formalism. The Pharisees and Sadducees were in constant contention. To leave Jesus was to fall among sticklers for rites and ceremonies, and ambitious men who sought their own glory. The disciples had found more peace and joy since they had accepted Christ than in all their previous lives. How could they go back to those who had scorned and persecuted the Friend of sinners? They had long been looking for the Messiah; now He had come, and they could not turn from His presence to those who were hunting His life, and had persecuted them for becoming His followers.

“ ‘To whom shall we go?’ Not from the teaching of Christ, His lessons of love and mercy, to the darkness of unbelief, the wickedness of the world. While the Saviour was forsaken by many who had witnessed His wonderful works, Peter expressed the faith of the disciples,—‘Thou art that Christ.’ The very thought of losing this anchor of their souls filled them with fear and pain. To be destitute of a Saviour was to be adrift on a dark and stormy sea.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 393.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 In class, talk about the difficult question of why some people, when given evidence for Jesus as the Messiah and for the truth of Christianity, gladly accept it, and why others, when given that same evidence, reject it?
- 2 What more important truth could there be than that Jesus Christ died for our sins? Yet, how did we ever come to know this crucial truth? By science, natural law, natural theology, logic, and reason? While these things could, in fact, lead us to believe in a Creator God, a First Cause, an Unmoved Mover, or something else, none of these disciplines, either alone or even together, could teach us the most important truth that we need to know: Christ died for our sins. What should this fact—that all these disciplines, even in principle, could not lead us to the one thing that we really need to know—teach us about how crucial it is to make the Bible our final and ultimate authority on matters of faith?
- 3 Why is it so important for someone’s own faith to recount the things God has done in his or her life?