

# Introduction to the Book of John



## SABBATH—OCTOBER 12

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** John 1:1–5; John 1:1–3, 14; John 1:9–13; John 3:16–21; John 17:1–5.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “In the beginning, the Word [Jesus] was already there. The Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1, NlrV).



These Bible truths help us readers to understand things about Jesus that the people in the story didn't understand at the time.

**IN LESSON 1**, we started our study with the end of the Book of John. The end of the Book of John explains why John wrote His book. This week's lesson goes back to the first chapter in the Book of John. In the first words or paragraphs of their books or letters, New Testament writers often tell us about the topics they will talk about. In the first chapter in his book, John also tells us what he is going to talk about. John's topics include Bible truths about Jesus. These truths talk about a time before God made the skies and the earth.

These Bible truths help us readers to understand things about Jesus that the people in the story didn't understand at the time. We can see important topics that John likes to talk about as he tells his story about Jesus.

This week's lesson will start with the introduction to the Book of John (John 1:1–18). The introduction will give us a list of the most important topics that John will talk about in his book. Later this week, we will look at these topics again in other parts of John's Gospel.

## JESUS WAS THERE FROM THE BEGINNING (John 1:1–5)

John starts his book about the story of Jesus' life with this amazing thought: "In the beginning, the Word was already there. The Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1, NIV). This beautiful verse contains a very deep and powerful idea about Jesus. As humans, we can hardly understand what this wonderful idea means, but we must try.

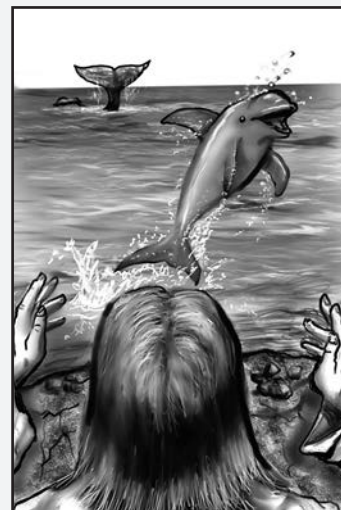
The first thing that John does in this verse is give us a hint about the time when God made the skies and the earth. John starts his book with the same words that Genesis begins with: "In the beginning" (read Genesis 1:1; John 1:1). We learn that the Word, Jesus, was already alive before God made anything. So, John tells us that Jesus has always been there with God the Father from the beginning.

Next, John tells us that "the Word was with God." In John 1:18, John says, "No one has ever seen God. But his only Son is very near to his Father's heart" (WE). This verse shows us that Jesus and the Father are very close.

Then John says, "The Word was God" (John 1:1, WE). How can Jesus, who is the Word, be **with** God and, at the same time, **be** God? We can learn the answer to our question when we understand something important about the Greek language. The Greek language doesn't have a word for "a" or "an." But the Greek language does have a word that means "the." When John writes "the" before a word, he shows us that he is talking about a certain person or thing and not just any person or thing. In John 1:1, John writes the word "the" in the Greek language before "Word." So, the word "the" tells us to pay careful attention to the special person John talks about.

In the verse "the Word was with God," John writes the word "the" before the word "God" in the Greek language. John wants us to know he is talking about a certain Person, God the Father. But when John writes "and the Word was God" in the Greek language, John doesn't write the word "the" before the word "God." That's because John is now talking about Jesus. Jesus is not God the Father. At the same time, Jesus is God's Son, the Second Person of the Godhead. The Godhead includes all three members of the Three-in-One God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

In John 1:3, 4, John tells us that Jesus is the One who made all things.



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**THE WORD, JESUS, BECAME A MAN (John 1:1–3, 14)**

**Read John 1:1–3, 14. What do these verses tell us that Jesus did? Why is this Bible truth so important?**

John doesn't start his book about the life of Jesus with the name of Jesus. John also doesn't start with the topic about Jesus' work as the Savior. John starts his book with the word "logos," which means "the Word." In John's day, Greek thinkers used the word "logos" to talk about the science of thinking and all of its important rules.

The Greek thinker Plato taught that life happened in two places. One place is heaven, where everything is perfect and nothing changes. The second place is here on earth, where everything always changes and nothing is perfect. Some thinkers in Bible times said that the "logos" was a place halfway between the perfect things in heaven and the real things here on earth.

John uses the word "logos" in a completely different way than Plato. John says that the truth, or the "logos," is not some spiritual idea that is difficult to understand. Also, the "logos" is not some place halfway between heaven and earth. For John, the "logos" is a real person: Jesus Christ. Jesus became a person and lived among us (John 1:14).

John also believed the "logos" is the Word of God, or the Bible. More important, God communicates with us. He shows Himself to people in the most amazing way: Jesus became a man and lived with us (John 1:14). In John's book about the life of Jesus, the "logos" shows us the everlasting God, who enters time and space. This same God speaks, acts, and communicates with humans in a personal way. The word "logos" shows us that the everlasting God became a human, one of us.

In John 1:14, John says that the "logos" or "the Word became a man and lived among us" (John 1:14, ERV). The Greek word written as "lived" means "to set up a tent." John used this Greek word to help us remember Exodus 25:8. In this verse, God told the Israelites to make a place of worship, which was the same as a tent. Then God could come live with His people. In the same way, Jesus, who was God, lived in a human body. He hid His glory in human flesh so that people could come meet with Him when He was on this earth.

**The God who made us became one of us and lived with us. Wow! What does this tell us about God's love for us?**



**In John's book about the life of Jesus, the "logos" shows us the everlasting God, who enters time and space.**

**OBEYING OR NOT OBEYING THE BIBLE (John 1:9–13)**

**Read John 1:9–13. In these verses, what does John say about how people think and feel about Jesus?**

John 1:1–18 introduces John’s story about Jesus’ life. John 1:1–18 talks about Jesus. We read these verses to learn how people at the time thought and felt about Jesus. John also names Jesus “the true Light” (John 1:9, ICB). John used “light” because Jesus’ words shine into the hearts and minds of every person on the earth. Jesus is the same as a light that helps us understand the Bible. As C. S. Lewis wrote, “I believe in Christianity in the same way that I believe the sun rises: because I see the sun rise, its light helps me to see everything else.”—“Is Theology Poetry?” (n. p.: Samizdat University Press, 2014), page 15, originally presented 1944, adapted.

Also, look at what John 1:9 is really saying. Light comes to everyone. But not everyone welcomes the light. As we will see in tomorrow’s study, one of the most important ideas in John’s book is how people accept or reject Jesus. That idea starts right here in John chapter 1. The sad truth is that the Savior came to His own people, the Jews. But many didn’t accept Him as the Savior.

In Romans 9–11, Paul talks about the same thing: many Jews rejected Jesus. But Paul doesn’t end with sad news. Paul says that many Jews, along with non-Jews, will accept Jesus as their Savior. Paul warns the non-Jews not to brag about accepting Jesus, as if they are better than the Jews. Paul says, “It is not natural for a wild branch to be part of a good tree. But you non-Jews are like [the same as] a branch cut from a wild olive tree. And you were joined to a good olive tree. But those Jews are like a branch that grew from the good tree. So surely [for sure] they can be joined to their own tree again” (Romans 11:24, ICB).

In much the same way, John says that all the people who accept Jesus as their Savior will become the children of God. We become God’s children when we believe in Him. (Read John 1:12, 13.)

This idea connects John’s introduction about Jesus with the end of his book. In John 20:31, we learn why John wrote his book: “so you will believe that Jesus is the Savior, the Son of God, and that when you believe, you will have everlasting life in His name.”



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all the people who accept  
Jesus as their Savior  
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### IMPORTANT IDEAS IN THE BOOK OF JOHN: Part 1 (John 3:16–21)

**Read John 3:16–21; John 9:35–41; and John 12:36–46. How do these verses show us the same idea of accepting/rejecting Jesus that we saw in the introduction to John’s book about Jesus’ life?**

In John’s book, there are two groups of people: (1) people who believe in Jesus and accept Him as the Savior, and (2) people who choose not to believe in Him.

The followers of Jesus belong to the first group. So does Nicodemus (who is slow to believe), the woman at the well, and the man who is born blind. In the second group are the Pharisees, a group of religious leaders, and the high priests, who are the top religious leaders for the Jews. This group also includes one of Jesus’ followers, Judas, and the people who saw Jesus do the miracle that fed more than 5,000 people.

John doesn’t use the word “faith” or “belief” (from the Greek word “pistis”) anywhere in his book on Jesus’ life. But John uses the word “believe” (from the Greek word “pisteuo”) 98 times! John uses this word in the New Testament 241 times. So, we can see that the word “believe” is a very important idea in John’s book. Why does John use the action word “believe” and not the word for “faith” or “belief”? Maybe John wants us to understand that being a Christian is something we do. We show we are Christians in how we live and not just in what we believe. As we know, the devil believes in Jesus, too (read James 2:19).

In the Book of John, the two groups of people are different in the way they think about Jesus. People who believe in Jesus come to Him and do not run away from Him. They accept His words, even when He scolds or warns them. Jesus is the same as the Light that shines on them. These people believe and become children of God.

People who don’t accept Jesus come to Him to fight with Him. They love the dark, or lies, and not the light, or Bible truth. This group thinks that Jesus’ sayings are hard to accept. They see Jesus breaking old rules and not doing what they expect. They judge Jesus. They don’t allow His teachings to judge them. We see this behavior again and again in the Jewish spiritual leaders. The spiritual leaders did not want to accept Jesus as the Savior.



**Being a Christian  
is something we do.**

## IMPORTANT IDEAS IN THE BOOK OF JOHN: Part 2 (John 17:1–5)

**Read John 17:1–5. What did Jesus mean when He said, “ ‘Father, the time has come. Give glory [honor] to your Son so that the Son can give glory to you’ ” (John 17:1, ERV)?**

In the beginning of the Book of John, John introduces Jesus as God’s Son who made everything. “He made all things. Nothing was made without Him making it” (John 1:3, NLV). John also talks about Jesus’ glory: “The Word became a human being [person]. He made his home with us. We have seen his glory. It [His glory] is the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father. And the Word [Jesus] was full of grace [mercy and forgiveness] and truth” (John 1:14, NIV). In the Greek language, the word “glory” means “bright,” “fame,” and “honor.” John uses the word “glory” to talk about how people gave honor to Jesus and how Jesus got honor from God.

In the Book of John, John connects the idea of giving Jesus glory or honor with the topic of His “time.” His time means the time of His death (compare with John 2:4; John 7:30; John 8:20; John 12:23–27; John 13:1; John 16:32; and John 17:1). So, the Cross is Jesus’ time of glory or honor.

We may think this idea is strange. How can the Cross be a time of Jesus’ honor or glory? The cross was the most awful way to die in Roman times. God on a cross shows us how heaven’s story becomes connected with our story.

As a man, Jesus died a terrible death. He suffered. He was nailed to a cross as a criminal. Before He died, Jesus cried out, “ ‘My God, My God, why have you left Me alone?’ ” (Matthew 27:46, NLV). We see this human, dark side of the Cross in the Books of Matthew and Mark (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).

But the Cross also has another side: a side of glory. We see this glory in the books of Luke and John (Luke 23:32–47; John 19:25–30). We see the Cross as the place where God saves sinners and gives them mercy. Also, Jesus, the Son of God, gives Himself to the Father.

How strange, right? God’s best glory is shown in His worst shame.

**Think about what it means that God needed to die on the cross to save us from sin. What does this idea tell us about how bad sin really is?**



**God’s best glory is shown  
in His worst shame.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “ ‘God With Us,’ ” in *The Desire of Ages*, pages 19–26.

“Jesus said, ‘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 must be shown to the sinner as the Savior who dies for the sins of everyone. When we look at Jesus, the Lamb of God, on the cross, we start to understand God’s plan to save us. God’s love leads us to confess our sins and to stop sinning. When Jesus died for sinners, He showed a love that we can’t begin to understand. As the sinner looks at this love, it touches his heart. His mind fills with Bible truth. He feels sad about his sins. . . . Any time people start to improve their lives, Jesus makes that happen. We don’t understand how this happens. But we wish to improve our lives, and we make changes for the better. Jesus invites us to look at His cross. When we sinners look at the Cross, we look at the Person we killed with our sins. That is the time when we feel the guilt from breaking God’s law.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pages 26, 27, adapted.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In John 1, why would John talk about Jesus as the Person who made everything? Why is this topic important to everything we believe as a church? Why is it so important for us to have a correct understanding about how life started? What does the Bible teach us about this topic?
- ② Jesus was fully God and fully human. Why is the Bible truth that Jesus is fully God an important part of our beliefs as Seventh-day Adventists? What would happen to our beliefs if we thought that Jesus was only human and was not God? Also, what happens to the cross if the everlasting God didn’t die on it? What if only a man died on it? What do we lose as Christians if Jesus is not the everlasting God?



**“God’s love leads us to confess our sins and to stop sinning.”**

## A SABBATH “SEED”

An American Indian man walked to the place where volunteers constructed a building. The volunteers put log walls on the foundation of the All Nations Center in the town of Wapato, Washington, USA.

The man said to the volunteers, “What are you guys building here?” Then the man asked, “Are you building another church? You guys don’t even know what day of the week to keep.”

The man in charge was named Jeff Weijohn. Jeff started a conversation with the man. The man never heard of Seventh-day Adventists before. So, the man thought the new church would be open for worship on Sunday. But the man believed that we should worship God on Saturday.

Jeff was surprised when he heard this information. Jeff never heard of a group of American Indians who had a history of keeping the Sabbath. Jeff talked with a history professor to learn more about this group of American Indians. The history professor explained that one or two groups of American Indians who lived on the Yakama Indian Reservation believed that the seventh day was God’s holy day. In the past, God planted a “seed” of Bible truth for the Sabbath in the hearts of these American Indians. So, they worshiped God on the seventh day.

Jeff and his wife, Terri, were excited when they heard this information. They wanted to share the Good News with more American Indians. So, in 1990, Jeff and Terri started a special program to work with the American Indians.

Jeff and Terri got help from a 13th Sabbath Offering to start their work. In 2001, they opened the All Nations Center. This center can be used for many things. People can come to the center to worship on Sabbath mornings. The center has a food area where meals are served. Each year, 300 to 400 people come to enjoy a special Mother’s Day meal. The center has a game area for playing sports. The center also offers day camps, Vacation Bible Schools, and after-school teaching.

Jeff said, “One reason we built this center was because the community didn’t have a place to meet.”

American Indians can also rent the center. One American Indian leader chose to rent the center for health meetings. He chose the center and not a casino. A casino is a place where people gamble. The leader said that gambling was destroying his people. Jeff said, “The leader wanted nothing to do with the casino.” The center is a big success. Now the SDA Church in other countries (including Canada) is opening their own centers for Indians.

Thanks for your 13th Sabbath Offerings in the past. Pray that God uses your offering to continue to change lives.

## INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**God planted a “seed” of Bible truth for the Sabbath in the hearts of these American Indians.**



**Terri and Jeff Weijohn**