

God Blesses People Who Believe



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 9

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 8:56; Genesis 18:16–18; John 12:1–3; John 19:4-22; John 20:19–31; Matthew 24:2.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘God will bless people who believe though [even if; while] they have not seen me’ ” (John 20:29, WE).



Their stories tell us something important about Jesus.

IN THE BOOK OF JOHN, we read about many people who met Jesus. These people have different beliefs and experiences. Their stories tell us something important about Jesus.

Let's look at what these people say about the Lord. John the Baptist: “ ‘Look, the Lamb of God!’ ” (John 1:36, ERV). Philip: “ ‘We have found the man that Moses wrote about in the law’ ” (John 1:45, ERV). Nathanael: “ ‘Teacher, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel’ ” (John 1:49, ERV). The Samaritan woman: “ ‘Can this be the Christ [the Savior]?’ ” (John 4:29, NLV). The Samaritans: “ ‘Now we believe because we heard him ourselves. We know now that he really is the one who will save the world [sinners]’ ” (John 4:42, ERV). Peter: “ ‘Lord, where would we go? You have the words that give eternal [everlasting] life’ ” (John 6:68, ERV). Martha: “ ‘Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ [the Savior], the Son of God. You are the One who was coming to the world [to sinners]’ ” (John 11:27, ICB). A blind man: “ ‘I was blind, and now I can see’ ” (John 9:25, ERV). Pontius Pilate to the Jews: “ ‘See, your King!’ ” and “ ‘I do not find Him guilty’ ” (John 19:14, 6, NLV). Thomas: “ ‘My Lord and my God!’ ” (John 20:28, ERV). Who were these people? Why did they say these things about Jesus?

ABRAHAM SHOWS HIS FAITH IN JESUS (John 8:56)

Jesus wasn't afraid to tell people about Himself. He also shared what other people said about Him long ago in the past. Abraham was one of the people who talked about the Savior.

Why did John include Abraham's story about the Savior in his book? Read Genesis 12:3; Genesis 18:16–18; Genesis 26:4; Matthew 1:1; and Acts 3:25 for the answer.

“ ‘The Scriptures [the Old Testament] told what would happen in the future. These writings said that God would make the non-Jewish people right [accepted; clean] through [because of] their faith. God told this Good News to Abraham before it happened.’ Galatians 3:8 [ERV]. Abraham showed faith in the coming Savior. Jesus told the Jews, ‘Your father Abraham was very happy that he would see the day when I came. He saw that day and was happy.’ John 8:56 [ERV]. God gave Abraham a male sheep to offer as a substitute for Isaac. This sheep was a symbol of Jesus, the Son of God. Humans sinned and broke God's law. Their punishment was death. The Father looked at His Son and said to sinners, ‘Live. I have found a substitute who will die for your sins.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 154, adapted.

Abraham was the father of the Jewish people. God gave Abraham the promise that everyone on earth would be blessed in the future because of him. This future blessing was the Savior. The Savior was born from Abraham's future children.

Abraham also was the father of everyone who accepts God in faith (Hebrews 11:8, 17–19). Abraham was willing to give his son Isaac as an offering to God (Genesis 22). This action showed Abraham's faith. Abraham's offering also helps us understand God's plan to save sinners.

Jesus said to the Jews, “ ‘Your father Abraham was very happy that he would see the day when I came’ ” (John 8:56, ERV). The leaders answered, “ ‘What? How can you say you have seen Abraham? You are not even [so much as] 50 years old!’ ” (John 8:57, ERV).

Jesus' answer is amazing. He says, “ ‘For sure, I tell you, before Abraham was born, I was and am and always will be!’ ” (John 8:58, NLV). Jesus uses words that help us remember what God said to Moses at the burning bush. When Jesus says these words, the leaders understand that Jesus is saying He is God. So, the leaders pick up stones to throw at Jesus (John 8:59).



“God gave Abraham a male sheep to offer as a substitute for Isaac.”

MARY SHOWS HER FAITH IN JESUS (John 12:1–3)

Six days before Passover, Jesus visits Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus. Passover was the time when God saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. A little while before, Jesus woke Lazarus up from the dead. Jesus also healed Simon, their neighbor, from a terrible skin disease. Simon invited people to honor Jesus at a feast. Simon was thankful that Jesus healed him. Martha served at the feast. Lazarus sat at the table with the guests (John 12:1–8).

What does Mary do at the feast? What does her behavior show us about her? Also, how do her actions show us who Jesus really is? Read John 12:1–3 for the answers.



Jesus knows what is in people's hearts.

The perfume was very expensive. It was worth about a year's pay for the everyday worker at that time. Mary may have brought this perfume to show Jesus that she was thankful to Him for forgiving her sins. Jesus also woke her brother up from the dead. Mary planned to use the perfume someday to pour on Jesus' body after He died and was laid in the grave. But then Mary heard that Jesus was going to become King. She wanted to be the first one to pour oil on Him and bring Him honor.

Mary didn't want anyone to notice what she was doing. But John tells us, "And the sweet smell from the perfume filled the whole house" (John 12:3, ERV). Judas scolded Mary. Judas said that the perfume should have been sold and the money given to the poor. But Jesus said, " 'Leave her alone. She has kept this oil for the time when they will bury me. You will have poor people with you always. But you will not always have me with you' " (John 12:7, 8, WE).

Jesus knows what is in people's hearts. We see this important idea in the Book of John again and again (John 2:24, 25; John 6:70, 71; John 13:11; John 16:19). Jesus knows what is in Judas's heart at Simon's feast. John makes sure to tell us that Judas was selfish and a thief (John 12:6).

Jesus knew what was in Mary's heart and in Judas's heart. Jesus knows what's in your heart, too. What should this important truth teach us about our need for Jesus to change our hearts and fill us with His holy life?

PILATE ANNOUNCES WHO JESUS IS (John 19:4–22)

John tells us how the Jewish leaders try, again and again, to arrest Jesus, put Him on trial, and kill Him. The leaders failed many times. Jesus says, His time to die had not come (John 2:4; John 7:6, 8, 30; John 12:7, 23, 27; John 13:1; John 17:1).

In chapter 19, the time comes for Jesus to die. Soldiers arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The soldiers take Jesus to Annas, then Caiaphas, the top Jewish spiritual leader. Then the soldiers take Jesus to Pilate two times.

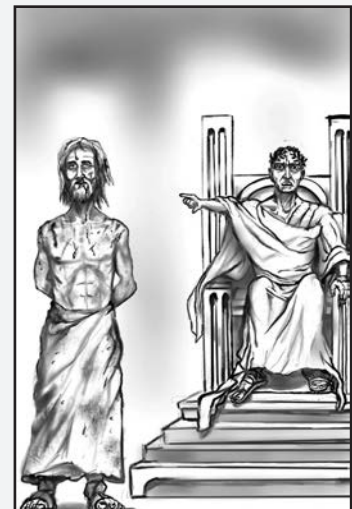
As we saw already, John writes about many people who announce that Jesus is the Savior. Now John writes about one more person who announces who Jesus is. Pilate puts Jesus on trial. Pilate's announcement about Jesus is important because Pilate is a Roman, a governor, and a judge. Most people who tell us about Jesus were Jews or people who were not rich and powerful.

What does Pilate say about Jesus? What important idea in the Book of John does Pilate's announcement show us? Read John 18:38 and John 19:4–22 for the answers.

The soldiers bring Jesus to Pilate early on Friday morning (John 18:28). Pilate's plan was to send the prisoner quickly to die. But Pilate is surprised when He meets Jesus. Jesus is so filled with peace. The governor then carefully asks Jesus questions. Pilate listens to Jesus' answers. Jesus says, " 'You say that I am a king. The reason that I was born was that I should tell what is true [Bible truth]. That is why I came into the world [to the people on earth]. Everyone who likes what is true listens to what I say' " (John 18:37, WE).

In the end, the governor sends Jesus to die on the cross. But before Pilate sends Jesus to the cross, he announces three times that Jesus is innocent (John 18:38; John 19:4, 6). Above the cross, Pilate put a sign with these words: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (read John 19:19, ERV). This sign is part of Pilate's announcement about who Jesus is. But Pilate sent Jesus to die on the cross anyway.

The Truth Himself, Jesus, stood in front of Pilate. But Pilate let the mob bully him into making the wrong decision. Pilate is a sad example of what happens when we pay no attention to what our hearts and minds tell us is correct!



Pilate's announcement about Jesus is important because Pilate is a Roman, a governor, and a judge.

THOMAS SHARES HIS FAITH IN JESUS (John 20:19–31)

Read the story about Thomas in John 20:19–31. What can we learn about faith and doubt from Thomas’s story? What big mistake did Thomas make?



**Jesus says,
“‘God will bless people
who believe
though [even if; while]
they have not seen me’ ”
(John 20:29, WE).**

Jesus showed Himself to His followers after He woke up from the dead. Jesus’ followers were afraid. So, they hid together in a room and shut the door. Thomas wasn’t with the other followers. Later, Thomas heard the news from the other followers that Jesus woke up from the dead. But Thomas was sad. The news didn’t match his idea about God’s kingdom. Maybe Thomas wondered why Jesus showed Himself to His other followers when Thomas wasn’t there.

Thomas said, “ ‘I will not believe it until I see the nail marks in his hands. And I will not believe until I put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side’ ” (John 20:25, ICB).

Do you see how Thomas refuses to believe until Jesus gives him enough proof first? We see many people who behave this way in the Book of John. Nicodemus argued with Jesus, saying, “ ‘But if a man is already old, how can he be born again?’ ” (John 3:4, ICB). The woman at the well asked Jesus, “ ‘Sir, where will you get that living water? The well is very deep, and you have nothing to get water with’ ” (John 4:11, ERV). After Jesus fed the crowd with the bread and fish, they asked Him, “ ‘What miracle will you do? If we can see a miracle, then we will believe you. What will you do?’ ” (John 6:30, ICB).

Many people will not believe until they see proof first. But the Book of John warns us against doubting. After Jesus woke up from the dead, He asks Thomas to come, see, and touch His body. Then Jesus says, “ ‘God will bless people who believe though [even if; while] they have not seen me’ ” (John 20:29, WE).

“God doesn’t ask us to believe without giving us proof for our faith. The proof God gives us is in His life, His love, and the Bible. These things give us many good reasons to believe. But God doesn’t remove all reasons for doubt. So, we must trust the proof that God gives us. We must not ask God to prove Himself to us before we have faith in Him.”
—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 105, adapted.

What if someone asked you, “Why do you believe in Jesus?” What would you say?

OUR STORY ABOUT JESUS (Matthew 24:2)

Imagine in your mind that you were there with Jesus and saw Him do His miracles. We'd believe in Jesus after seeing these signs and wonders, right? We'd like to think so. In some ways, we have more reasons to believe in Jesus than the people did who saw in person the miracles He did.

What are those reasons?

What are some of the happenings and knowledge that we, as Christians, have today that the people who lived at the time of Jesus didn't have? How do these things help us believe in Jesus? Read Matthew 24:2; Matthew 24:14; and Matthew 24:6–8 to answer the questions.

Yes, we have the powerful story about Jesus' life in the Book of John. We also can look back at history and see how the things that Jesus and other Bible writers promised came true. Jesus said that the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed (Matthew 24:2). Jesus promised that His followers would share the Good News everywhere on earth (Matthew 24:14). We also can see the terrible falling away and separation that Paul said would happen in the church (2 Thessalonians 2:3). We can see that this earth continues to be an evil place, just as Jesus said (Matthew 24:6–8). All during the life and work of Jesus, His group of followers was small. People attacked and hurt them because of their faith. So, Jesus' followers should have disappeared from history a long time ago. How could these Christians know, as we do, that all the things the Bible promised would happen? Those things did happen. Our faith is itself a part of the promise that Jesus made when He said His followers would share the Good News everywhere on earth.

Today, 2,000 years later, we can tell people about Jesus. We can share what He did for us in the past and what He does for us now. People can tell us why they believe in Jesus, too. Their reasons may help us. But we must learn about Jesus for ourselves. We learn about Jesus when we read the Bible. The Holy Spirit helps us to understand its wisdom and accept Jesus as our Savior.

Each one of us can have a story to tell about Jesus. But first we must have a relationship with God. Our story may not be as amazing as seeing the dead wake up. Maybe we never saw someone, who was born blind, see for the first time. But if we know Jesus, as a Friend, we can tell other people about Him.



Each one of us can have a story to tell about Jesus.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Test of Faith,” pages 145–155, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “In Pilate’s Judgment Hall,” pages 723–740, in *The Desire of Ages*.

Thomas “knelt down at the feet of Jesus. ‘Thomas said to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” ’ [John 20:28, ERV]. . . .

“Jesus accepted Thomas’s faith. At the same time, in a soft and loving way, Jesus also scolded Thomas about his doubts. ‘Jesus said to him, “You yourself have seen me. Is that why you now believe? God will bless people who believe though they have not seen me.” ’ [John 20:29, WE]. Thomas’ faith would please Jesus more if Thomas was willing to believe what the other followers told him about Jesus. If we now followed Thomas’ example, no one would believe and be saved. Everyone who accepts Jesus must accept Him because of the stories that other people share about Him.

“Many people doubt. They excuse their doubt because they say that if they had the proof that Thomas had, they would believe. These people don’t understand that they already have that proof. They also have so much more. Many people wait, the same as Thomas, for God to remove all cause for doubt. But if they wait, they will never have faith. After a while, they will not believe. People who look on the dark side of things and complain don’t understand what they are doing. They are ‘planting’ seeds of doubt. They must collect the terrible crop of doubt that grew from these seeds. Then they will have no power to hope and believe in a time when they need faith and trust the most.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 807, 808, adapted.



Everyone who accepts Jesus must accept Him because of the stories that other people share about Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How were Abraham and Thomas different in their faith? What can we learn from their stories?
- ② Ask for volunteers in class to share their faith about Jesus. Our stories about Jesus may be different. But how do our stories about Jesus show us the same Bible truths about Him?
- ③ Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” How does the Book of John help us answer this question?
- ④ Look at Daniel 2 and 7. How do these chapters give us more reasons to believe in Jesus?

FROM PIN TRADER TO CAMPER

Jacob Pierce's family loved to trade pins. They were excited to find new pins at the big Pathfinder meeting in the United States. At the meeting, Jacob's mom saw a man with an Alaska pin. Mother knew Jacob loved Alaskan wildlife and nature. So, Mother tried to convince the man to trade her the pin.

The man said, "I can't trade. This pin is special and only for pastors in Alaska."

Mother asked, "What do you do in Alaska?"

The man introduced himself as Tobin Dodge. Tobin was in charge of Alaska Camps. Alaska Camps is a summer camping program of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for children ages 8 to 17.

Mother asked, "Could my son work there?"

Tobin said, "Yes, we train people to become camp supervisors when they are 16. We give them jobs when they're 18."

Jacob was excited about spending the summer in Alaska. He joined the camp as a helper. Jacob worked there for three years.

Jacob said that working at camp can be hard at times. One year, Jacob enjoyed spending time with an American Indian boy at Camp Polaris. Jacob and the boy both loved nature. They climbed Jackknife Mountain, which is near the camp. But the boy refused to behave. He also used bad words. Jacob thought the boy was more interested in false ideas than in learning about Bible truth. The boy blamed a rainy day on another boy who killed a spider. The Alaskan boy told Jacob, "If you kill a spider, rain starts falling."

Jacob felt upset with the boy at times. But at the end of camp, the boy hugged Jacob and walked to his dad. When Jacob saw the two of them together, he started to understand the boy's behavior. Jacob could see that the boy's father was not a good parent.

Jacob, who is 20, said, "Most of the kids who come to Camp Polaris don't have Christian parents or know anything about Christianity. So, when they come here, many of them learn about Jesus for the first time."

Many of the kids who come to Camp Polaris have different problems from children at other summer camps in the Alaska Conference. The kids who come to Camp Polaris are almost all Alaskan Indians. These kids must fight against false beliefs, alcohol and drugs, and pain and suffering from their past lives.

Jacob says, "Being here is worth it. God really needs volunteers here." Part of your 13th Sabbath Offering will help open a new center at the Adventist church in Bethel, Alaska. The Bethel church sends local children to Camp Polaris every year.

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**The boy blamed
the rainy day
on another boy
who killed a spider.**



Jacob Pierce