

The Son of God With Us



SABBATH—JULY 19

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 23; Mark 9:12; Luke 24:7; John 1:1–14, 29; Hebrews 2:9.

MEMORY VERSE: “He [Christ] was already here from the beginning. We have heard him. We have seen him with our eyes. We have looked at him. Our hands have touched him. That life has appeared. We have seen him. We give witness about him. And we announce to you that same eternal [forever; without end] life. He was already with the Father. He has appeared to us” (1 John 1:1, 2, NIV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: No person in history has had a greater influence¹ on the world than Jesus. The future of each of our lives comes down to one very important question that Jesus Himself asked: “ ‘Who do you say I am?’ ” (Matthew 16:15, NIV).

SOME PEOPLE TODAY DISAGREE over whether Jesus ever lived. But the historical proof is very clear. The real question is who Jesus was and why He was on earth. Was He just a good man? Or was He the Son of God?

“A man who was just a man and said the kind of things Jesus said would not be a great religious teacher. He would either be crazy, the same as the man who says he is a poached egg. If not, he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. This Man was, and is, the Son of God. If not, he must be a madman or something worse.”—Adapted from C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1960), page 52.

As Adventists, we believe what the Bible says about Jesus is the truth, period. We do not waste time on the foolish arguments about whether Jesus said and did the things the Bible says He said and did. As Adventists we believe those things because they are written in God’s Word (the Holy Bible).

After all, if we cannot believe the Bible, what can we believe?

1. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.

SUNDAY—JULY 20**WHO WAS JESUS? PART 1
(Mark 9:12)**

Over many hundred years, people argued about Jesus. They sang about Him. They wrote about Him. They preached about Him. They cursed Him. They made movies about Him. They even died for Him. But most people in the world today do not know Him or what He has done for them.

If someone were to ask you “Who was Jesus?” how would you answer? Why?



Most people in the world today do not know Jesus.

Your answer should have been that Jesus is the true Son of God and that He died for our sins and rose again. That He did great things while here on earth is fine. That He preached powerful sermons is fine. That He showed to us the character of God² is

2. character of God—who God is; understanding and having the character of God is the same as being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God’s laws (Ten Commandments) show us His character.

3. province—place, area, state.

4. human—having to do with men, women, or children.

fine. But none of these things are really important if Jesus does not give each of us the promise of eternal life.

According to Mark 9:12; Luke 24:7; John 1:29; Romans 5:15–21; and Hebrews 2:9, why is the death of Jesus so important in helping us understand who Jesus was?

Through history there have been many great men and women who have done wonderful things. There are the things that seemed even more wonderful than what Jesus of Nazareth had done. After all, Jesus was an unofficial rabbi from a very small and unimportant province³ of Rome. He died an early death and left just a few afraid and depressed followers behind. But, when we understand who Jesus was and just what He did while here, we understand that no other person could be equal to Him. In the end, without Jesus and what He did for us, anything in this world would come to nothing. This is because without Jesus and His death the whole world and everything in it would come to nothing.

MONDAY—JULY 21**WHO WAS JESUS? PART 2
(Mark 10:42–44)**

What made Jesus so special in human⁴ history? It was not a powerful public relations and marketing team.

Jesus did not have one. It was not His wealth. Jesus did not have any money in the world. And He did not have any political power. Instead, Jesus had been on the weak side of political power.

Jesus did have power. But it was a selfless power. He healed diseases, restored broken lives, and left religious fakes speechless. Jesus once said to His disciples (followers), “‘You know about those who are rulers of the nations. They hold power over the people. Their high officials order them around. Don’t [do not] be like that. Instead, anyone who wants to be important among you must be your servant. And anyone who wants to be first must be the slave of everyone’ ” (Mark 10:42–44, NIV). Not a good plan for those who want political power very much!



Jesus showed that if anyone wants to be great, he or she must first serve the needs of others.

What is found in John 1:1–14 that shows us why Jesus was so special in all human history?

We can read these famous words so often that we may forget just how wonderful they really are. Think about what the first chapter of John means to us! These should be words filled with hope. Modern science teaches that we are here by some great accident. Purely by chance, this accident created people on earth. The Bible tells us that we are created beings (people) of a living God, One who became “flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14, KJV). Instead, science teaches that we are brought together by chemicals that just happened to form on the surface of this planet. Science points out that there was no meaning or purpose to our creation. Science also argues that there is no meaning and purpose to lives and deaths. What a sharp difference from the hope offered us through Jesus.

What do you find very positive about those verses in John 1? Write down your thoughts and bring them to share in class on Sabbath.

TUESDAY—JULY 22

JESUS AMONG SINNERS AND PUBLICANS⁵ (Matthew 11:19)

Jesus might have been the eternal Son of God. But He was also a human who lived among us. Jesus mixed with both family and friends. Christ as Son of God mixed with other

5. publicans—tax collectors. The people of Israel hated the tax collectors because they worked for Rome.

people, which is surprising. But what is more surprising is that He chose to mix with certain kinds of people, such as sinners and publicans.

What do Matthew 11:19; Mark 2:15, 16; and Luke 15:1, 2 tell about the kind of people Jesus was mixing with? Who are the people in today's society that are considered worthless?

Jesus came to show the character of God to all the world through both His life and His death. By mixing with those who were considered worthless, Jesus was giving us a message about the character of God and about what God judges as good and bad. As humans (people), we judge people by the way they look (1 Samuel 16:7). But God looks at the heart, where He can see what we often do not.



God looks at the heart and sees what we cannot.

How does Matthew 21:28–32 help us understand why Jesus mixed with the kinds of people He did? What important message can we who are “religious and well-respected” learn from this?

Jesus knew the heart, but we do not. Jesus saw what was going on inside those who looked so unworthy and so unpromising on the outside. But Jesus also knew what was going on inside those who looked so “righteous [holy] and religious.” We might be able to fool one another, and even ourselves. But we can never fool the Lord.

What is your attitude (feeling) toward the “publicans and sinners” of your own society? How much of the attitude of the scribes and the Pharisees⁶ do you hold in your own heart? (Remember, these men were very self-deceived.)

WEDNESDAY—JULY 23

EXPOSING THE RELIGIOUS FAKES (Matthew 23:13, 14)

We often picture the kind Jesus working gently with the worst of sinners. But this is not the whole picture given in the Bible. When the time was right Jesus let loose many strong warnings about and toward one kind of people. As we all know, Jesus had strong words to speak against many of the religious leaders of Israel. They were very strong words. In some

6. scribes and Pharisees—religious leaders of Jesus' day who believed a person must keep God's law to be saved.

ways Jesus sounded just as some of the Old Testament prophets⁷ did. Of course, this is not surprising because Jesus was the One who inspired them to write what they did to begin with. So, for many hundreds of years, Jesus was begging His people to reform (change) one way or another. Is it any different today?

What were the charges in Matthew 23 that Jesus was making against the leaders? How serious were these charges? Which charge would be the worst, and why? If you could write in just a few sentences the main reason for His complaints, what would you say?

If you really read carefully, all the things that Jesus accuses them of doing are surprising. One theme (topic; subject) comes through very clearly: These men were hypocrites.⁸ They were very ugly in their souls. But they pretended to be faithful and religious.

What kind of false religious front do you try to show? How different are you in private than in public? How might your local church view you if they knew the real you? What can you do to make the real you more like yourself as a public person?

THURSDAY—JULY 24

LOVE FOR THE HYPOCRITES (Romans 5:8)

What is the message of Romans 5:8? How seriously do we take it? Do we really understand that Christ's death included the worst sinners? Among these sinners were the hypocrites we read about yesterday.

Jesus went through many rough situations. But He never forgot His mission. Jesus' mission was to save the lost. This is unbelievable! Jesus was hanging on the cross. And the weight of the world's sin was crushing out His life. But the good of others was always on His mind. (Read Luke 23:34, 42, 43; John 19:26.) What a powerful lesson for us who are followers of Jesus!

This lesson is for the religious leaders. They were the ones whom Jesus complained against. Yesterday we read His strong criticisms against them in Matthew 23.

How is Matthew 23:37 different from the rest of the chapter? What does this tell us about Jesus and His feelings toward the people who received His criticisms? What very important principle (rule) is found here for us? How can we take what we find here and use it in our own lives? How can we use it in our relationships with others who refuse to accept our messages about God?

Missionary work is not easy. Consider what happened when Jesus

7. prophets—men or women sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.

8. hypocrites—people who pretend to do one thing but are really doing another. They are two-faced.

Himself was here. Think about how so many refused God's message. But Jesus showed love, care, and mercy even toward the worst. We should not feel angry at those who refuse to accept the gospel.⁹ Instead, we should show pity, love, and mercy toward them. When people refuse to listen, they are not refusing us, personally. They are refusing to accept Jesus.



When people refuse to listen to what we have to say about Jesus, we must show them mercy and love.

How do you answer those who are negative about your witness? How can you learn to feel mercy, instead of feeling anger? Why would anger only make things worse?

FRIDAY—JULY 25

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Woes¹⁰ on the Pharisees,”

pages 610–620, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“The Pharisees thought themselves too wise to be taught. They felt themselves too righteous to need salvation.¹¹ And they felt themselves to be too highly honored to need the honor that comes from Christ. The Saviour turned away from them to find others who would accept the message of heaven. And Jesus’ messages found a home in the uneducated fishermen, in the publican at the marketplace, in the woman of Samaria, and in the common people who heard Him gladly. Jesus found His new bottles for the new wine. The messengers for the gospel work are those who gladly receive the light which God sends them. These are His workers for spreading the knowledge of truth to the world.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 279.

“We may do much in a short time if we will work as Christ worked. We may do much good if we use His method of teaching. Jesus tried to meet the minds of the common people. His style was plain, simple, but complete. Jesus used His examples from the scenes of nature that His hearers knew well and could understand. Through nature Jesus showed eternal truths that connect heaven and earth.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*,¹² page 565.

9. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news of salvation.

10. woes—troubles; causes of sorrow.

11. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.

12. evangelism—the spreading of the good news about Jesus to the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Why is the idea of Jesus as just a great religious teacher not good enough? What hope would we have if Christ were only a religious teacher and nothing else? Look at C. S. Lewis's example from Saturday's introduction. Why is that such a powerful argument in favor of Christ as the Son of God? Or is it? What choices do we have if Jesus is not the Son of God?

❷ As a class, discuss your answer to Monday's last question.

❸ We might have many things to say about the Pharisees. But there is one point we should not forget. The Pharisees were members of God's remnant¹³ church. They were the cream (the best) of the only religion in the world that had present truth. What is the message and warning for us in that fact?

SUMMARY: The story of Jesus is the most important story in history. His life and teachings show us the way to live and how to treat one another. But they also show us the way to eternal life—by believing that He saved us through His death on the cross.

13. remnant—a small group of God's faithful people. The Seventh-day Adventists believe that they are members of God's remnant church.