

Believing in the Son of God



SABBATH—AUGUST 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 16:24, 25; John 1:1–3; John 3:36; John 5:24; Romans 6:1–6; Hebrews 12:4; 1 John 5:1–12.

MEMORY VERSE: “Who is it that has won the battle over the world? Only the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” (1 John 5:5, NIV).

IDEAS ABOUT WHO JESUS WAS HAVE CHANGED FROM TIME TO TIME THROUGHOUT HISTORY. Some people separate the Jesus of the Bible from the Jesus of history. Many claim the two may not have had much in common. The Jesus of history was supposed to be a common man with a strong connection to God. That is all. And to their minds, He certainly was not the Son of God raised from the dead! Others believe Jesus was just a political rebel who tried to overthrow the Roman Empire.

We may be tempted to think that these topics are unimportant. But who Jesus was and what He claimed about Himself influence¹ every person. The way we think about Jesus influences how we relate to God, how we understand the plan of salvation,² and how we can have assurance³ of salvation.

That is why John discusses the topic in his letters.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What promises of victory are we given? What does John mean when he talks about “by water and blood”? What reasons are we given for faith? What does John say about Christ as God? What does John teach about the promise of eternal (forever; without end) life?

1. influence—to have power or an effect over persons or things.

2. plan of salvation—what God has done and is doing to save us from sin.

3. assurance—the promise of hope.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 23**BELIEVING IN JESUS AND
OVERCOMING THE WORLD
(1 John 5:1–5)**

We have studied John's teaching about brotherly love. Now we study the subject of faith in Jesus as the Christ/Messiah, the Son of God. The two topics, belief and love, are discussed in the first verses of chapter 5.

John wants his readers to believe in Jesus as the Christ. He says those who do are born of God. They love God, love one another, and keep the commandments. Believers in Jesus as the Son of God also overcome the world (1 John 5:1–5).

Throughout history some people have thought Christians have to fight a big battle in overcoming the world. But that is wrong. The Bible does not say that Christians have to fight as crusaders (Christian soldiers) and force others to accept Christ. The New Testament does not say the kingdom of God as a nation needs to be defended or made larger by war. The battle that Christians have to fight is a spiritual battle. In John's letters, the way to overcome is not by the use of weapons. The way to overcome is by faith. And faith is shown by the kind of life one lives.

In the following verses, John is talking about conquering (winning) and overcoming. What can we learn about these promises from John 16:33; 1 John 4:4;



The battle Christians have to fight is a spiritual battle.

Revelation 2:7, 11; Revelation 3:5, 21; and Revelation 12:11?

The greatest Victor (winner) is Jesus Christ. Because He has won the war over sin, His followers are able to overcome too. In some way, they already have the victory. Jesus' victory is for them. The overcomers receive wonderful promises from God that they no longer have to be slaves to sin (Romans 6:1–6). In Jesus and in the new life we have in Him, we serve the Lord, not Satan, our old master.

In what areas of your life have you experienced the promise of victory and overcoming? In what areas have you failed, and why? How can you have the victory that is promised you? What is stopping you?

MONDAY—AUGUST 24

THE JESUS IN WHOM WE BELIEVE (1 John 5:6–8)

John has pointed to the importance of having faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. Now he goes on to show his readers who this Son of God was. One of the things he says about Jesus is He came “by water and blood” (1 John 5:6, NIV).

What does that mean?

In 1 John, water is brought up only in these verses for today. But, it appears quite often in the Gospel⁴ of John and also in Revelation. The water John mentions in 1 John 5:6, 8 must be about Jesus and His first coming. And it must be one of the three things that points to Jesus as the Messiah (Chosen One) and the Son of God.

The phrase “blood and water” is used in John 19:34 (NIV) in connection with Jesus’ death. But it does not seem to be the water John mentions in 1 John 5:6–8. Rather, in the beginning of John’s Gospel, water is connected with baptism⁵ (John 1:26, 31, 33; John 3:5, 23). This seems to be the setting for 1 John. Jesus came as a Man and began His work by being baptized with water. He ended His ministry (work) on the cross when He shed His blood. Water points to Jesus’ baptism, and the blood points to His death on the cross (1 John 1:7).

Baptism and crucifixion⁶ point to who Jesus was and what He would do for us. In both cases God’s actions and humans’ actions showed Jesus really was the Son of God (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 27:50–54).

In 1 John 5:6–8, John still was dealing with the false teachings of the anti-christs.⁷ These teachings were influencing (changing) the minds of believers. If Jesus was not the Messiah or the Son of God, their message would be that the death of the Son of God in our place on the cross is not needed to save us. Such a teaching would lead to a very different understanding of salvation and of the Godhead. Salvation would be through knowledge (*gnosis*), not through the Cross. So, John wanted the people to know exactly who Jesus was and what He had done for them through His life and death. John did not want people to be deceived by these false teachings.



Jesus began His work by being baptized with water.

4. Gospel—one of the first four books in the New Testament that tells the story of Jesus’ life and His teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

5. baptism—when a person is put completely under water and brought back up out of it. This means that Jesus has forgiven this person’s sins and has given him or her new life.

6. crucifixion—the death of Jesus on the cross.

7. anti-christs—people who work against God and Christ.

Water and blood. Think about those two symbols (word-pictures) and how they represent (show) Jesus. In what ways are we to experience that water and blood in our own lives? In other words, what did your baptism mean to you? What does it say about you? What changes have come in your life? The same with blood: what does the symbol of blood mean to you as a Christian? Read Matthew 16:24, 25; Hebrews 12:4.



Jesus announced that the Holy Spirit would testify of Him.

TUESDAY—AUGUST 25

JESUS AND THE TESTIMONY⁸ OF GOD (1 John 5:9, 10)

The first and second witnesses to Jesus as the Son of God are water and blood. The third witness is the Holy Spirit (1 John 5:6, 8). John's Gospel claims Jesus had announced that the Holy Spirit would testify (witness) about Him (John 15:26).

Why are these witnesses needed? Two to three witnesses were required in the Old Testament to prove a matter (Deuteronomy 19:15). John wants to make clear Jesus' case has a sound foundation. John wants to show we have good reasons for believing.

What is John saying to us in 1 John 5:9, 10? What does John want us to believe?

For John, the idea of witnesses about Jesus is quite important. In his Gospel, John names several others: John the Baptist's testimony (John 1:6, 7), Jesus' own testimony (John 3:32), the testimony of the Samaritan woman (John 4:39), the testimony of Jesus' works (John 5:36), the testimony of the Bible (verse 39), the testimony of God the Father (John 8:18), the testimony of the people who watched the resurrection (return to life from the dead) of Lazarus (John 12:17), the testimony of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26), and the testimony of the apostle⁹ John himself (John 21:24). This is very impressive. John wants to establish that a belief in Jesus depends on strong testimonies.

But we need to understand the testimony of the Father in the verses for

8. testimony—witness.

9. apostle—a disciple (follower) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel (the good news about Jesus) after Jesus returned to heaven.

today has been different. It seems to make the most sense if it is connected with the threefold testimony in the verses we studied earlier this week. This threefold testimony is God's own testimony.

John says if we are willing to accept the witness of people, then we can accept the witness of God Himself much more. Often we just accept what people tell us, even if we have no proof for believing what we hear. How much more should we accept God's own witness and believe in Jesus as described in the New Testament!

God is dependable and true (1 John 5:20). If we do not accept God's testimony, we claim He is a liar. Then it can be a serious charge.

What are all the reasons you have for believing in God, in Jesus, and in the hope given to us in the Seventh-day Adventist message? Go back over those reasons, write them down, pray over them, and bring them to class to share with others.

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 26

THE BELIEF IN THE TRINITY¹⁰ (1 John 5:7, 8)

In the Bible, the words "in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth" are found in 1 John 5:7, 8 (NKJV). The only problem is they are a later addition, not

found in the earlier Bibles.

Bible thinkers agree this statement is not true. This verse has been added, probably to support the doctrine of the Trinity. Of course, Bible verses should never be added or removed, for many reasons (Revelation 22:18). One of the most important reasons is people may start having doubts about how truthful the Bible is as a whole. And they may start to mistrust God's Word.

But the fact is that, even without these words, the doctrine of the Trinity is firmly established in John's books. The authors of the New Testament believe that God is One, but they picture Jesus and the Holy Spirit as God. To support the idea of God as Three Persons in One, the idea of the Trinity is important.

John makes powerful arguments about Jesus as God. What does John teach about Jesus Christ in John 1:1–3, 14; John 8:58, 59; John 10:30, 31; John 20:28; 1 John 2:23; and 1 John 5:20?

There is no question about Jesus being God from these verses (and many others). But the verses we are studying this week do not try to establish the doctrine of the Trinity. That was not the point. They are the verses about faith in Jesus as the Son of God and the witness given to the world about Him.

Keep Jesus as God in mind. Go

10. Trinity—the idea that God is Three in One; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

back over the final scenes of His life, right up through the Cross. As you do, remember Jesus was also God the Creator. Then think about what these truths mean. Why should this truth change our lives?

THURSDAY—AUGUST 27

THE RESULT OF BELIEVING IN JESUS (1 John 5:11, 12)

God has given a wonderful gift to us. This gift is eternal life (1 John 5:11, 12). But it is available in Jesus Christ only. How can we receive this gift? By accepting God's testimony about His Son and by believing in and accepting Jesus.

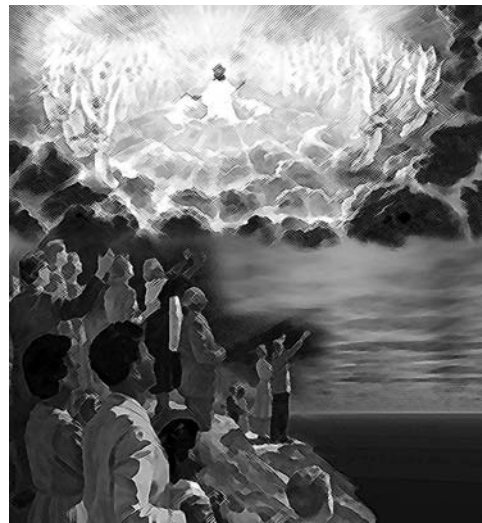
What does the apostle John teach about eternal life in John 3:16, 36; John 5:24; and John 6:54?

John's discussion on faith in Jesus and who Jesus is and why we can accept God's testimony is not just a mental exercise. It has a clear, useful goal, which is finding eternal life in the Son of God. John's enemies questioned Christ as the true God, questioned Christ as a human (person), and wanted to separate Christ as God from Christ as the human. The enemies had a different opinion of Jesus and did not believe in the Bible's interpretation of Jesus. Because the enemies did not have the Jesus of the Bible, they did not have eternal life. Suppose they had claimed to have eternal life. Suppose they boasted about having a better

knowledge and claimed a good feeling about having eternal life. But their claims still would not be true.

"Eternal life is possible through Jesus Christ only." According to 1 John 5:11, 12, what does this say to us?

John clearly states that those who do not have the Son of God do not have life. But those who have Jesus have everlasting life. These are very strong words, which mean a lot to all people everywhere. No wonder the issues of salvation are so important. They are a question of eternal life or eternal death. You cannot get much more serious than this.



Those who have Jesus have eternal life.

What about people who have never had the opportunity (chance) to hear the gospel (good news about Jesus) given in a clear manner? Are they all lost? As you think about your answer, do not forget

God’s love for all people. How can you learn to better trust the Lord on this difficult question?

FRIDAY—AUGUST 28

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Matthew 16:13–17; John 12:37–46.

“ ‘In him was life; and the life was the light of men’ (John 1:4 [KJV]). It is not talking about present life. It is talking about eternal life, which is God’s property. The Word [Jesus], who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something that each person receives. It is not eternal. This is because God, the Life-Giver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. Jesus said, ‘I give it up myself’ (John 10:18, NIV). In Him was life, original, unborrowed from anything. This life is not man’s to control. He can manage it only through Christ. He cannot earn it. It is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as His personal Savior. ‘ “And what is eternal life? It is having you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” ’ (John 17:3, NIV). This is the open fountain of life for the world.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, pages 296, 297.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① In class, go over your answer to Tuesday’s final question. How can

you get strength and encouragement from one another’s answers?

② John talks about the witnesses we have been given about Jesus. What about the witness we ourselves give to the world? If someone had seen every part of your life during the past 24 hours, what kind of witness would you have given? If you had known someone was going to be watching, what would you have done differently? After you give your answer, ask yourself, Why would I have done it differently? Also, do you not know that Someone (God) is watching anyway?

③ OK, so you have the promise of eternal life. But what does that mean? How should it influence your life here now? What do you do differently now, knowing you have this promise?

④ Go back over the Ellen G. White quote given earlier. What part means the most to you? What hope and encouragement can you get from it?

⑤ We can have eternal life or eternal death. So, why is it still so easy for us to get caught up in the things of the world that cannot satisfy us or give us eternal life? What is the secret of being able to break the hold of the world on us? How can you help someone who truly wants to be a Christian, who wants these promises for himself or herself, but cannot seem to break away from the world?