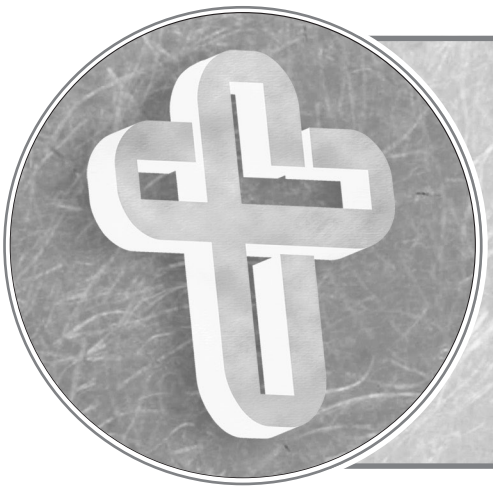


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
AUGUST 16 2025

who is Jesus?

Scripture Story: John 7-9; 10:1-30.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 49-52.
Key Text: John 8:12.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The Jews enjoyed a rich history full of oral tradition, the Scriptures, their weekly Sabbaths and annual feasts, and the Temple with all its ritual and worship to prepare them to recognize and receive their Messiah when He should come. So why was there all the whispering, confusion, and outright anger and rejection of Him, particularly by the religious leaders? It wasn't as though most people weren't impressed by His miracles or His teachings. Jesus was very popular and well liked by ordinary people. They were convinced for the most part that He was a prophet and healer. The problem with Jesus was that He went too far. Performing miracles and showing compassion, sounding authoritative about the Scriptures—that was sort of OK. But as we read through these chapters of John, what is very clear is that Jesus was claiming His deity. In doing so, both in His teaching and in the way He chose to perform His miracles, He was challenging the traditional ways in which the Jews had come to interpret the Scriptures. Bottom line: He wasn't the Messiah they were expecting. They were expecting a Messiah who would come as a gloried and conquering King to establish the nation of Israel and to rule all the nations through them in Jerusalem. They were looking for the Jesus that we Adventists anticipate seeing in His second coming. Jesus missed the mark and was disappointing to them because they didn't want a spiritual kingdom brought on by the new birth and the remaking of the human heart. Are we any different?

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Deepen their understanding of how Jesus is the greatest expression of God's love and redemptive plan for the human race. *(Know)*
- Gain a greater sense that faith in Jesus is not merely about religious belief, but a real relationship with God. *(Feel)*
- Choose to put their complete faith in Jesus and respond to His offer of abundant life and His promise to meet their deepest needs. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Son, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 4: "God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory

for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Prepare and distribute scripts from John 8–10 in the form of a play. Assign parts: have someone read the part of Jesus, assign a narrator, some would be groups of people whispering, others would be the Pharisees. Choose a passage that wasn't previously used in *Into the Story*—perhaps the woman brought in sin to Jesus, or the healing of the blind man. Or both. After the class acts out the scene and the reaction to Jesus, have a discussion with them about what insights they got from role-playing the Scriptures. Then ask how the reactions to Jesus during His time on earth compare to how people react to Him today.

Illustration

In January 2001 three young teens, refugees from the Darfur region of Sudan, were transported to Fargo, North Dakota, landing in the middle of winter: "This is a stove burner. This is a can opener. This is a brush for your teeth. The new things came in a tumble" ("The Lost Boys of Sudan; The Long, Long, Long Road to Fargo," Sara Corbett, the *New York Times*, April 1, 2001).

Just as a youngster from the barren desert of the Sudan might not know what to make of a snow-covered prairie, many denizens of Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Galilee weren't quite sure what to make of Jesus. "Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" (Mark 6:3, NIV).

In this case, familiarity with Jesus would ultimately breed contempt for Him and an inability for the "native son" to perform the miracles He did elsewhere, saying: "'A prophet is not withour honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.' He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith" (Mark 6:4-6, NIV).

How we see Jesus will determine what we do with Him. If all we see is an itinerant teacher, we will not understand His place in the Godhead. If we don't see His high-priestly role, our understanding of His present ministry will be deficient. And if we don't see Jesus as soon-coming King, our lives may be spent in ways other than those He would desire.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

One of the most important things a follower of Jesus can do is share His love with others. How well we know Jesus and what our understanding of Him is will determine what we share. Just like the early disciples, and like His neighbors in Nazareth, we need to make sure that our picture of Jesus is full, complete, and even compelling. If we lift Jesus up, He will draw all men unto Him.

Out of the Story for Teachers

As you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

Use a white or chalkboard and be prepared to write down all the lists of responses that flow from a question-and-answer session with your class.

Ask:

- What did Jesus' brothers think about Him? Did they believe He was the Messiah?
- What are some of the things people were saying as they "gossiped" about Jesus?
- How did Jesus respond to the questions raised by the people?
- What was the Pharisees' reaction to Jesus?
- Why were the religious leaders critical of Jesus' healing of the blind man?
- What angered them about Jesus' response to the woman taken in sin?
- What claims did Jesus make about Himself?

Say:

Jesus was very deliberate and strategic in the way He presented Himself, the words He said, and the miracles He performed. For example, it is no coincidence that it was the time prior to, during, and

after the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus made these significant claims: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35, NIV); "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12, NIV); "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them" (John 7:37, 38, NIV).

Ask the students if they know what the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated. Ask for volunteers to read out loud Leviticus 23:33-36, 39-43. Facilitate a discussion about all the provisions God made for the Israelites during the time they journeyed from Egypt, through the desert, until they came into their Promised Land. Then, using the background and context section, lead the students to understand how Jesus was the physical embodiment of God's fulfilled promise and provision for His people.

Sharing Context and Background

Coming Full Circle

Just before coming upon Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7, He already had a major conflict with the religious leaders (John 6); many of His early admirers walked away. Why? After feeding the 5,000 Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." He was comparing Himself to the manna God sent from heaven—saying He was the true manna. That's why we see John 7 opening with Jesus brushing off his brother's challenge to go to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. Already the Pharisees were out for His blood. Even before Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, people

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Make It Personal

As teachers we have a balancing act between giving proper historical context to the biblical teaching and bringing it down to our own context so the student will latch on to relevant points to ponder and practice. If we take too much time with the exposition and word studies, we risk losing the attention of our students. If we move too quickly to modern application, we lose vital information that gives the student time to process the spiritual depths there for them.

One great way to handle that tension is to make the Scriptures come alive for the student by engaging them not merely in group reading and lecturing, but as the text lends itself, to role-playing. Type it up ahead of time like a script; assign students parts, including a narrator to fill in background. Have a group of them perform the scripture for the rest of the class. Then facilitate a roundtable discussion to unpack the nuances and meanings of the scripture. You may very well find yourself amazed at the depth of insights the students will share!

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* The Desire of Ages. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

were talking about Him and looking for Him.

It was no coincidence that Jesus stood on the steps of the Temple proclaiming: "I am the light of the world" during the Feast of Tabernacles. He placed Himself in the center of all the imagery God had given, preparing them to recognize Him when He would walk among them and usher in His kingdom. Jesus was ready to use this feast as a way to reveal more of Himself and His mission to men—just as God through the centuries had used the feasts as a way to reveal His plan of salvation.

Tabernacles was a time of celebrating all of the provision and protection God had shown His people as they journeyed from slavery in Egypt to a land promised to them—where they would be a nation and God would be their King. They celebrated by coming into the city of Jerusalem and setting up tents made from tree branches and leaves, bringing their gifts of thanksgiving—grain, grapes, and oil—to present to the priests at the Temple as a thank offering for their harvest; thanking God for providing rain and sun so that their land prospered. Also, they remembered how God provided food from heaven—manna—when they had no place to settle or plant in the rough desert as they journeyed in the wilderness. He gave them water from the rocks when the dry desert had nothing to offer them. He met their every need, sheltering them from wild animals, snakes, and scorpions, shielding them from the enemy nations and tribes. Jehovah was their great Provider. And as Jesus saw the sun lighting up the gold of the Temple walls, He pointed to it and said, "I am the light of the world." These walls—just as the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites by night in the desert—had always pointed God's people to the Messiah. There He was, pointing back at the walls and proclaiming that here He was, their long-awaited redemption!

III. CLOSING

Activity

Have the students think back to a new situation or a new environment: how they reacted, how they observed the people there, and how the people there received them. Was there a connection? Were they misunderstood? If the latter, how did they overcome it? Jesus didn't need to overcome misunderstanding, but He had a way of drawing people to Himself. What can we learn from that?

Summary

There has never been—and there never shall be again—Someone on this earth like Jesus. He was unique. But that uniqueness made for misunderstandings, resentment, and rejection. Yet in the midst of all this, Jesus knew who He was, why He had come, and what He had to do.

His questioning of the disciples—"Who do you say I am?"—wasn't to clarify any confusion on His part. It was to sharpen the minds of the disciples and help them understand that this wasn't another rabble-rousing movement; it was a mission that would change the world.

Having the correct picture of Jesus—Savior, Redeemer, High Priest, coming King, and Lord of lords—is vital to understanding His mission today, which really is our mission.

Ask: What picture do you have of Jesus? What picture of Jesus do others get from you?

Close with prayer.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*),* chapters 49-52.

*A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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AUGUST162025

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: John 7-9; 10:1-30.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 49-52.

who is Jesus?



Photo by Alden Ho

keytext

"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

(John 8:12, NIV)

flashlight

"God is light; and in the words, 'I am the light of the world,' Christ declared His oneness with God, and His relation to the whole human family. It was He who at the beginning had caused 'the light to shine out of darkness.' 2 Corinthians 4:6. He is the light of sun and moon and star. He was the spiritual light that in symbol and type and prophecy had shone upon Israel. . . . As the sunbeams penetrate to the remotest corners of the earth, so does the light of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon every soul" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 464).

what do you think?

What do you think is the reason Jesus' contemporaries had such a difficult time believing in Him as the Messiah?

____ lack of evidence
____ pride
____ Jesus' choice of friends
____ Jesus' background
____ His incredible claims

It's easy to be critical of the religious people who challenged and rejected Jesus. But remember, today we have the historical reality of Jesus' life, sacrificial death, and resurrection, and the witness of the first disciples and the early church. Yet many people can't seem to believe that Jesus was/is God in the flesh. As you study the lesson, think about why this may be. What do *you* think of Jesus?

did you know?

Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and secular people all believe in Jesus. Whether it is that He is a prophet or religious leader in history among all the other prophets, or whether it's that He was a good man who set a good example, or even that He is one god among a myriad of gods, almost everyone believes something about Jesus. Our global community has absorbed Jesus into its culture. So, as it turns out, all these centuries after Jesus' life, things haven't changed so much when it comes to all the different opinions people have about Jesus. Who do *you* say Jesus is? What you believe about Jesus makes all the difference in the world!

INTO THE STORY

"When the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, 'Leave Galliee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.' For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

"Therefore Jesus told them, 'My time is not yet here.'. . .

"However, after his brothers had left for the festval, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. Now at the festival the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and asking, 'Where is he?'

"Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, 'He is a good man.'

"Others replied, 'No, he deceives the people.' But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders.

"Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. The Jews there were amazed and asked, 'How did this man get such learning without having been taught?'"

"At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, 'Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah? But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.'

"Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, 'Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.' . . .

". . . Many in the crowd believed in him. They said, 'When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?'"

"On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.'"

"On hearing his words, some of the people said, 'Surely this man is the Prophet.'

"Others said, 'He is the Messiah.'

"Still others asked, 'How can the Messiah come from Galilee? Does not the Scrip-

ture say that the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?' Thus the people were divided because of Jesus."

(John 7:2-6, 10-15, 25-31, 37, 38, 40-43, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Read through John 7 through 10 and list some of the things people were saying about Jesus.

_____
_____
_____

What was the main reason the Jews had for doubting that Jesus was their Messiah? (John 7:27, 41-43, 52).

_____
_____
_____

List Jesus' answers to each of the questions raised about Him.

_____
_____
_____

John's Gospel stands out from the others because in it we can find the most about what Jesus says about Himself. How many of the "I am"s of Jesus you can find? List them below. If you make the extra time you can include John 6 and 11 also to see more of the "I am"s!

_____
_____
_____

Why did the religious leaders become enraged with Jesus and want to kill Him? (John 8:58; 10:33).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them'" **(John 7:37, 38, NIV).**

"Jesus answered, 'My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own'" **(John 7:16, 17, NIV).**

"'Very truly I tell you,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!'" **(John 8:58, NIV).**

"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'" **(John 8:12, NIV).**

"Therefore Jesus said again, 'Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep'" **(John 10:7, NIV).**

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" **(John 10:11, NIV).**

further insight

"Under a variety of representations [Jesus] warned His hearers of the calamity that would follow all who rejected the blessings He came to bring them. He had given them every possible proof that He came forth from God, and made every possible effort to bring them to repentance."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 452

Sabbath

Read Mark 8:29.

In the *What Do You Think?* section you had the opportunity to consider what people in Jesus' day thought about Him and how that compares to today's global culture. Do you know anyone who isn't a Christian? Have you gotten an idea of what they think about Jesus? Do you have any Jewish friends, or Muslims, or Hindus, or Buddhists? Have you found that they all accept Jesus on some level? What truth can you share with them about Jesus that is unfamiliar to them?

_____

_____

Sunday

Read John 8:48.

After reading the *Into the Story* section and answering the questions in the *Out of the Story* section, ask yourself this question: What systems were in place for Jewish people so that they should have been able to recognize Jesus as the Messiah?

_____

_____

Monday

Read John 10:7.

Why were there so many differing opinions about Jesus—in His day and in ours? What are the barriers to having a clear view of Him?

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read Revelation 21:22-24.

In this week's *Flashlight* Ellen White gives us deep insight into how meaningful Christ's claim about Himself was. Jesus was calling Himself light—the source of all light. Go back to chapter 51 of *The Desire of Ages*, page 464, and read the complete quote and the context around it. List all the events this claim would have brought to mind to His Jewish listeners. Then re-read today's Bible reading. Can you imagine that when Jesus said these words as He stood in the court of the Temple on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, He saw way beyond earth's history and knew how fully and thoroughly He could meet every need of the human soul and give us more than we could ever begin to fathom? Also, while you are in Revelation 21, take a look at verse 6!

Wednesday

Read Luke 7:23.

Read and think about this week's *Punch Lines*.

As you read through all the claims made by Jesus in this week's *Punch Lines*, what did you notice about Him that separates Him from all other religious gurus and prophets? Notice that Jesus doesn't brag about being educated by human teachers. He has it on direct authority from God. What kind of challenges did that claim cause for Him?

_____

_____

Look at His other claims. Jesus didn't say He would point people to the light; He said, "I am the light!" He wasn't claiming to give us living water—He *is* the living water; He *is* the way; He *is* the gate by which we enter God's kingdom. He *is* the shepherd who leads us!

In making His claims about Himself, Jesus was using the name that God had taught Moses. The Hebrew word is *Yahweh*—it means I AM. When Moses asked God, "What should I tell the Israelites when they ask who sent me?" God said, "I AM WHO I AM . . . I AM has sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14, NIV). Jesus was claiming THE NAME! Imagine if you were in the crowd hearing Jesus say this. Can you get a better grasp of why the religious leaders wanted to stone Him? How might you react? How quick are we to defend our traditions? Don't you get unnerved when what you believe is challenged?

_____

_____

Thursday

Read 2 Timothy 3:14, 15.

Read again the quote in *Further Insight.* What are some of the evidences in the Bible of Jesus' divinity? How should we believe in Jesus—by evidence or by faith or both? What would you say to someone who is struggling to accept Jesus as God and Savior?

_____

_____

Friday

Read John 7:16, 17.

Unlike the other Gospel narratives, John's Gospel gives us a picture of Jesus in the context of Jewish tradition and religious ritual. In doing so, he gives us the deepest spiritual insights into how Jesus is the fulfillment of all the symbolisms God had given to the Jews to teach them of His plan of redemption and restoration.

Through His Word and in the Sabbath and annual feasts, even in each item of the Temple, God used objects, events, and ritual to teach how He would save His people. Showing Jesus in that backdrop of everyday life and religious activity, John gave to the Jewish mind the idea that all those symbols are complete in Jesus. He's the real thing! He's the long-awaited Messiah who would save not just the Jews but the Gentiles too!

Which of the sayings and miracles of Jesus in this lesson stood out most to you? Why? What insights have you gained?

_____

_____

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 49-52.

*A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.