FOLLOWING JESUS VBS · TEACHER GUIDE · GRADES 4-6

Day 4: Jesus Saves Me

He Is Risen! | The Cross and the Empty Tomb

Bible story	The Cross and the Empty Tomb (Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30)
Memory verse (NKJV)	"He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." (Matthew 28:6)
Takeaway	Jesus died for my sins, was buried, and rose again, so I can be saved and live with Him.
Daily call	Leader: "He is not here" Kids: "He is risen!"

Objectives

- Find and read the key passages (Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30).
- Explain the big idea: Jesus died for my sins, was buried, and rose again, so I can be saved and live with Him.
- Say Matthew 28:6 from memory.
- Choose one specific way to thank Jesus for the cross this week.

Materials

- Bible (NKJV) for the teacher and for each student
- Prop for the attention getter: a large gray ball or paper "stone" and an empty box
- Copies of today's student lesson and activity sheets (one per child)
- Crayons, pencils, and name tags
- Craft supplies: Cardstock strips; Markers; Ribbon or yarn; Hole punch

Teacher preparation

- Read Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30 in your own Bible at least twice this week.
- Read the matching "31 Days with Jesus" devotionals at The Preacher's Pen: Day 26: The Crucifixion (The Ultimate Sacrifice); Day 27: The Guarded Tomb (Waiting in Hope); Day 28: The Resurrection (Risen Indeed).
- Make copies, prepare craft pieces, and set out the prop before children arrive.

Background for the teacher

- Crucifixion was reserved for slaves, rebels, and the worst criminals. Roman citizens were normally exempt.
- The sign above the cross was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (John 19:20).
- The tomb was cut out of rock and sealed with a large stone. The guard and the seal made tampering a serious crime (Matthew 27:62-66).
- Jesus was in the tomb parts of three days (Friday, Saturday, Sunday), rising "the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:4).
- Jesus, the sinless Son of God, willingly died on the cross for our sins (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb that was sealed and guarded (Matthew 27:57-66).
- On the third day Jesus rose from the dead, just as He said (Matthew 28:6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).
- Because Jesus lives, we have forgiveness, hope, and good news to tell (Matthew 28:7).

Lesson plan (40 minutes)

Time	Segment	What to do
0:00-0:04	Welcome and review	Attendance; quick review of earlier days.
0:04-0:08	Opener	Show a large gray ball or paper "stone" and an empty box. Ask the opening question.
0:08-0:20	Bible study	Have students find the passages and read aloud as you teach (script below).
0:20-0:26	Discussion	Ask the discussion questions; let students answer from the text.
0:26-0:30	Memory verse	Verse card race: put word cards in order, then say it from memory.
0:30-0:38	Activity sheets	Bible lookups first, then crossword, word search, scramble, and code.
0:38-0:40	Wrap-up and prayer	One-sentence takeaway from each student. Prayer.

Attention getter

Show a large gray ball or paper "stone" and an empty box. Ask: What is the best news you have ever heard? Today we will hear the best news in the whole world.

Bible story

Teach from an open Bible so students see that the story comes from God's word. Use this script as a guide; tell it in your own words.

The cross was planned long before it happened. Isaiah wrote that the Messiah would be "wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5). John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus said Himself that He would be killed and be raised the third day (Matthew 16:21).

Crucifixion was a slave's punishment, one of the cruelest deaths ever invented. Jesus was mocked, spit on, beaten, and crowned with thorns (Matthew 27:27-31). Above His head they wrote, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matthew 27:37). Yet Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). Darkness covered the land, and Jesus cried, "It is finished!" (John 19:30).

When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom and the earth quaked (Matthew 27:51). The centurion said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54). Why did Jesus die? “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Joseph of Arimathea, a rich disciple, laid Jesus in his own new tomb and rolled a large stone against the door (Matthew 27:57-60). The chief priests remembered that Jesus said He would rise, so Pilate let them seal the stone and set a guard (Matthew 27:62-66).

Early on the first day of the week, the women came to the tomb. A great earthquake shook the ground, an angel rolled back the stone and sat on it, and the guards became like dead men (Matthew 28:1-4). The angel said, “He is not here; for He is risen, as He said” (Matthew 28:6). The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out, but to let the witnesses in!

Jesus met the women and said, “Rejoice!” (Matthew 28:9). Paul later summed up the gospel: “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Tomorrow we will learn how people obeyed this good news.

> **Teacher note for today**
>
> Be reverent, not graphic. Emphasize God’s love (Romans 5:8), the burial, and the joy of the resurrection. Point ahead to Day 5: “What should we do?”

Discussion questions

1. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them.” What does that show about Him?
2. Why do you think the leaders put guards at the tomb?
3. Why was the stone rolled away if Jesus was already risen?
4. Read Romans 5:8. How does the cross show God’s love?

Review

- What did Jesus pray on the cross? (Luke 23:34) Answer: Father, forgive them
- What did Jesus say before He died? (John 19:30) Answer: It is finished
- What did the centurion say? (Matthew 27:54) Answer: Truly this was the Son of God
- What was rolled against the door? (Matthew 27:60) Answer: a large stone
- Who rolled back the stone? (Matthew 28:2) Answer: an angel of the Lord
- Why was Jesus not there? (Matthew 28:6) Answer: He is risen

Memory verse activity

Verse card race: write each phrase on a card, mix them up, and let teams race to put the verse in order. Then say it from memory.

Craft (Craft Time): Three Crosses Bookmark

Materials: Cardstock strips; Markers; Ribbon or yarn; Hole punch

1. Draw three crosses at the top and an empty tomb at the bottom.
2. Write 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 down the middle: died, buried, rose.
3. Punch a hole and tie a ribbon.
4. Use it to mark Romans 6 in your Bible for tomorrow.

Recreation and snack

Game: Roll the Stone: teams roll a large ball (the stone) along a course to the finish. Or “He Is Risen!” freeze tag: tagged players crouch until a teammate taps them and shouts, “He is risen!”

Snack: “Empty tomb”: half a mini pita or a round roll (the tomb) with a grape or round cracker “stone” rolled beside it. Open the pita to show it is empty. Always check allergy information on registration cards before serving food.

Songs (a cappella)

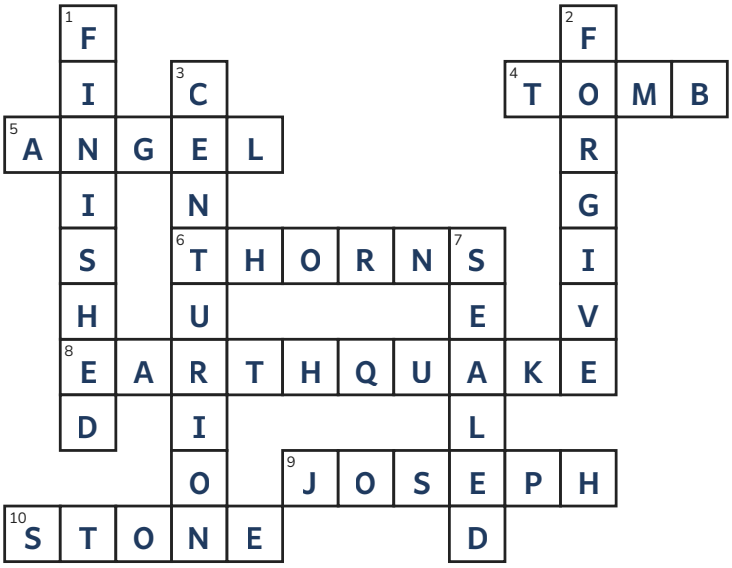
Sing without instruments. Suggested titles: Low in the Grave He Lay (Up from the Grave He Arose); Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross; Nothing but the Blood; Jesus Loves Me; He Is Lord.

Answer keys

Bible lookups

Reference	Answer
Luke 23:34	Father, forgive them
John 19:30	It is finished
Matthew 27:54	Truly this was the Son of God
Matthew 27:60	a large stone
Matthew 28:2	an angel of the Lord
Matthew 28:6	He is risen

Crossword



Across: 4 TOMB; 5 ANGEL; 6 THORNS; 8 EARTHQUAKE; 9 JOSEPH; 10 STONE

Down: 1 FINISHED; 2 FORGIVE; 3 CENTURION; 7 SEALED

Word search



Word scramble

1. CROSS, 2. TOMB, 3. STONE, 4. ANGEL, 5. RISEN, 6. SAVIOR, 7. FORGIVE, 8. ALIVE

Secret code

Answer: HE IS RISEN

Sources for this lesson

- “31 Days with Jesus” by Christopher Gallagher, The Preacher’s Pen: Day 26: The Crucifixion (The Ultimate Sacrifice); Day 27: The Guarded Tomb (Waiting in Hope); Day 28: The Resurrection (Risen Indeed) (preacherspen.org/courses/31-days-with-jesus/)
- Preaching Library lessons and outlines: A Slave’s Punishment for a King (Matthew 27:54); Jesus’ Burial and Ours (Matthew 27:57-66; Romans 6:3-11); Opening Our Eyes to Jesus (Luke 24:13-32); Love As Displayed By God (Romans 5:8)
- Scripture: Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30. All quotations from the New King James Version (NKJV).