FOLLOWING JESUS VBS · TEACHER GUIDE · GRADES 7-8

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

- Study Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30 in context.
- Explain why Jesus died and how His death, burial, and resurrection connect to baptism (Romans 6:3-4).
- Memorize Matthew 28:6.
- Write a specific, personal application.

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: Folded half-sheets (five panels); Pens; Bibles

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
0:00-0:05	Opener	Discussion starter (below).
0:05-0:20	Bible study	Read the passages together and teach the lesson (script below).
0:20-0:30	Discussion	Small groups of 3 to 4 work through the discussion questions.
0:30-0:33	Memory verse	Write it from memory; discuss key words.
0:33-0:38	Study sheet	Begin the study sheet in pairs; finish the journal page at home.
0:38-0:40	Application and prayer	Each student names one action step. Prayer.

Discussion starter

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18 aloud. Why would anyone call the message of the cross foolishness? Why do Christians call it power?

Bible study

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.

What does the cross of Christ mean to you? Many of us have heard about it so often that it can lose its effect. Paul warned that the cross could be "made of no effect" (1 Corinthians 1:17). "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Roman crucifixion was a slave's punishment. The first-century historian Josephus called it the most wretched of deaths. Victims were usually scourged, made to carry the crossbeam, nailed to it, and left exposed, with their crime posted above their heads. Jesus endured all of this: Barabbas was released in His place, and Jesus was stripped, crowned with thorns, mocked, spit upon, struck, and nailed to the cross under the charge, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matthew 27:26-37; Isaiah 50:6).

Why? Luke 24 shows two disciples on the road to Emmaus who needed their eyes opened to this. The Who: God the Father gave the Son (John 3:16). The What: Jesus is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2), the Lamb who takes away sin (John 1:29), our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). The When: at the appointed time, fulfilling Scripture (Matthew 26:18; John 19:30). The Why: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and

God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The burial matters too. Jesus was laid in a rich man’s new tomb, as Isaiah 53:9 foretold, sealed with a stone and guarded by soldiers (Matthew 27:57-66). Paul connects His burial to ours: “we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

Then came the first day of the week: an earthquake, an angel, a rolled-away stone, terrified guards, and the announcement, “He is not here; for He is risen, as He said” (Matthew 28:6). The resurrection is the foundation of our faith. It declares Jesus to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:4) and shows that sin and death do not have the final word. The question is not only whether Jesus rose, but whether you have died to sin and been raised with Him.

> **Teacher note for today**
>
> Students may ask about baptism. Answer from Scripture (Romans 6:3-4; Acts 2:38) and encourage them to talk with their parents and with [PLACEHOLDER: minister or elder contact name and phone].

Discussion questions

1. Has the cross ever “lost its effect” on you? How can we keep from becoming hard-hearted about it?
2. Walk through the Who, What, When, How, and Why of the cross. Which one means the most to you?
3. Why is the resurrection the foundation of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:14-17)?
4. How does Romans 6:3-4 connect Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection to baptism?

Review

- What is the big idea of today’s lesson? (Jesus died for my sins, was buried, and rose again, so I can be saved and live with Him.)
- Quote Matthew 28:6.
- 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).

Memory verse activity

Have students write the verse from memory, then discuss its key words and how it connects to today’s text.

Craft (Craft Time): The Who, What, When, How, and Why of the Cross

Materials: Folded half-sheets (five panels); Pens; Bibles

1. Label each panel: Who, What, When, How, Why.
2. Fill each panel with a verse from today’s lesson (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2; John 19:30; Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
3. Write one sentence of response on the back.
4. Keep it in your Bible for the Lord’s Supper.

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!”

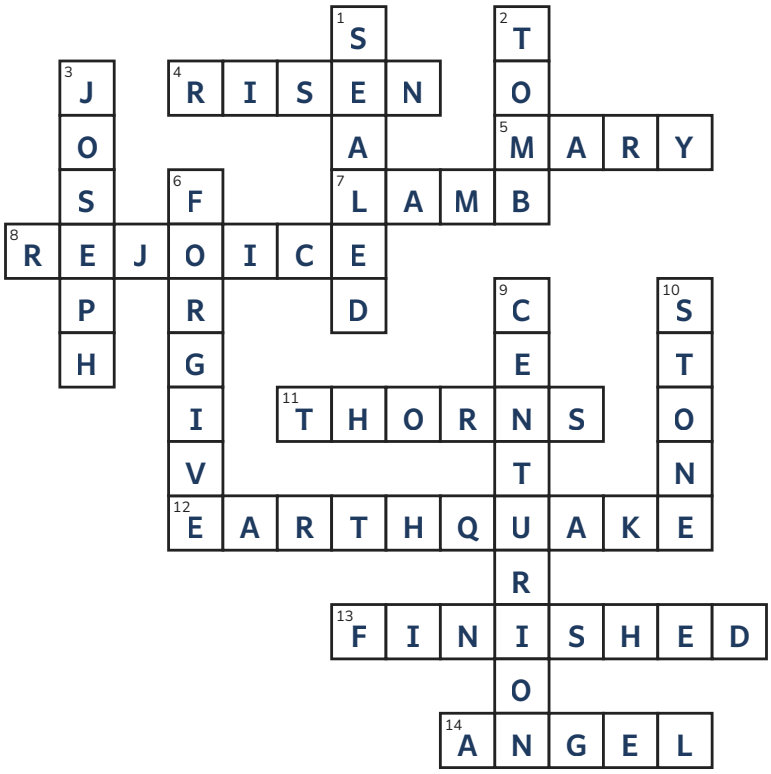
Snack: “Empty tomb”: half a mini pita or a round roll (the tomb) with a grape or round cracker “stone” rolled beside it. Open the pita to show it is empty. Always check allergy information on registration cards before serving food.

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

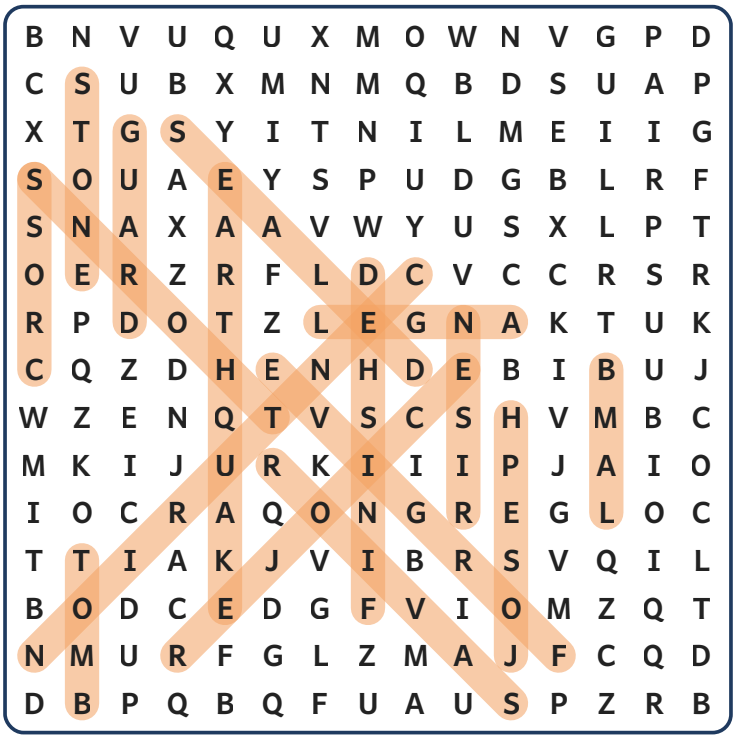
Crossword



Across: 4 RISEN; 5 MARY; 7 LAMB; 8 REJOICE; 11 THORNS; 12 EARTHQUAKE; 13 FINISHED; 14 ANGEL

Down: 1 SEALED; 2 TOMB; 3 JOSEPH; 6 FORGIVE; 9 CENTURION; 10 STONE

Word search



Study sheet

Answers come straight from the passages listed. Let students read the text aloud and answer in their own words; guide them back to the verse when needed.

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).