FOLLOWING JESUS VBS · DAY 4 · HIGH SCHOOL (GRADES 9-12)

Student Lesson

Jesus Saves Me: He Is Risen! | The Cross and the Empty Tomb (Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30)

Text: Matthew 27:27-28:10; Luke 23:33-46; John 19:30

The Cross and the Empty Tomb

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.

> "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."
>
> **Matthew 28:6 (NKJV)**

Four points to remember

- 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).

Background

- 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).

Discuss

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?
5. Jesus died for sinners (Romans 5:8). How should that change the way we treat people?

Live it

- Read one Gospel account of the crucifixion and resurrection this week (Matthew 26-28, Mark 14-16, Luke 22-24, or John 18-20).
- When you take the Lord’s Supper this Sunday, think about the Who, What, When, How, and Why of the cross.
- If you have questions about obeying the gospel, talk with your parents, a teacher, or one of the preachers or elders this week.

Further reading: “31 Days with Jesus” at The Preacher’s Pen (preacherspen.org/courses/31-days-with-jesus/): Day 26: The Crucifixion (The Ultimate Sacrifice); Day 27: The Guarded Tomb (Waiting in Hope); Day 28: The Resurrection (Risen Indeed).