

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: MATTHEW 27:27-61



The death of Jesus brings us life.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Jesus was crowned with thorns – Jesus, who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, endured the mocking of sinful men so that we might be saved. The soldiers gave Jesus a crown of thorns, a scarlet robe and a staff. They struck Jesus again and again on the head. This was no surprise to Jesus; He knew the fate that awaited Him. Consider these verses from the book of Isaiah, He would have known from childhood:

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted” (Isaiah 53:3,4).

Jesus was crucified – Jesus was nailed to the cross and crucified. A sign was placed over His head that announced His title as “King of the Jews.” The soldiers cast lots for His clothing, and a crowd gathered to mock Him.

Jesus endured crucifixion on our behalf. Crucifixion was a terrible way to be executed. It was so horrible that it was reserved for slaves and the most degraded criminals. If the legs of a person who was crucified were not broken, it might take days to die an agonizing death. Once the legs of a person were broken they could no longer support their weight to breathe so they would suffocate.

Jesus died and was buried – While Jesus was on the cross, Matthew 27:46 says He called out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” For all eternity past, Jesus had been in sweet fellowship with His Father. Now the Father poured out His full wrath upon Christ for our sin, forsaking Him upon the cross. John 19:30 adds that just before He died, Jesus said, “It is finished,” signifying that the wrath of the Father had been fully poured out. It did not take long for Jesus to die. He had been so tortured prior to being crucified that his weakened body did not last long.

Imagine being present, mocking Jesus and watching Him die. This was then followed by earthquakes, the tearing of the temple curtain and the resurrections of many. Those watching were terrified, instinctively knowing that Jesus was the Son of God. John 19:32 records that though the soldiers broke the legs of the criminals to hasten their death, they did not need to break the legs of Jesus, for he was already dead. Instead they pierced Jesus’ side with a spear.

Joseph of Arimathea requested Jesus’ body and buried Him in his own new tomb (see Matthew 27:57-60).

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

The death of Christ is the heart of the gospel. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (see Hebrews 9:22). Jesus was the Lamb of God who was slain for the forgiveness of our sins.

Romans 5:8, 9 says "...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him!"

As Jesus was dying, a darkness came over the whole land. At the moment of His death, the temple curtain was torn in two. This is the curtain that divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place and blocked men from the presence of God. With Jesus' death, the curtain was torn, and the way between man and God was opened. John records that just before Jesus died He said, "It is finished" (see John 19:30). The wrath of God poured out upon Jesus for the sins of man was exhausted, and the way to God was opened.

Luke 23:46 records that Jesus said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." He was not entrusting Himself alone but all those who through His sacrifice are "in Christ." Jesus died for all of us.



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMANUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 53:5

Connecting the passage to Christ:

When we read the account of the soldiers mocking Jesus and striking Him in the head, the connection to Isaiah's words becomes clear. Jesus suffered beatings and was mocked and spat upon by the soldiers on His way to be crucified.

Questions for reflection:

- How does reading this account from Isaiah affect you? (Parents, draw out your children and steer them toward gratefulness to Jesus.)
- How does Jesus' suffering speak of His love for us? (There is no way to comprehend how much agony He suffered because of the amazing love He has for us. If we thought every hour of every day about the depth of His love, we would still not be able to comprehend its fullness.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

ALL OUR SINS WERE NAILED TO THE CROSS

Supplies:

- brown craft paper to make a large six foot cross
- index cards enough for the whole class
- double stick tape

This exercise is to remind the children that Jesus died for our sins personally.

Review the story of the crucifixion from the gospel of Mathew. Then ask the children how many of them think they are sinners.

Explain to the children that Jesus is their only hope for the forgiveness of sin. Pass out the cards, one to each child. Have them think of one sin and write it on the card but not write their name. Then collect all the cards. Explain to them that if they place their hope and trust in Jesus' sacrifice as atonement for their sins, they can be forgiven.

Tell them that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is sufficient to pay the penalty for all of our sins.

Take the cards and tape them to the cross. Tell the students they can carry their own sin or they can ask Jesus to take it away by placing their faith in Him alone.

Do not call for a response to the gospel; children can be too easily manipulated or eager to please. But, if a child is affected by the gospel and indicates their desire to trust Christ, call their parents to minister to them. Remember, if it was your child, you would want to be present should they desire to profess their faith in Christ.



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THE CURTAIN TORN IN TWO

Supplies:

- large paper drop cloth to act as the temple curtain
- a Bible

This exercise is designed to teach the children why the temple curtain was torn and what that provides for us.

Set up the curtain in the front corner of your classroom. Place a stool behind the curtain with a Bible opened to Hebrews 10.

Explain to the children how the curtain divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place and that the presence of God rested behind the curtain (see "A Little Extra" below). Make a big deal about how the curtain prevented men from being in the presence of God and how it protected them from the judgment of God. Remember God is holy and men are sinful.

Ask them if they can see through the curtain? Of course they will say no. Then read the account of the crucifixion and the death of Jesus from Matthew 27:27-54. Explain to them that when Jesus died, the curtain was torn down the middle. At the same time rip the curtain right down the middle, opening the way to the other side.

Pick up the Bible and read Hebrews 10:19-22. Explain the verse to them noting that once we are forgiven, we can enter the presence of God with confidence.

The new temple is found in the heart of every believer where the Spirit of God lives. Not only is there no curtain, but we have become the Most Holy Place. That is why Paul tells us we should not defile the temple of the Holy Spirit by sinning (see 1 Corinthians 6:19).



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BRING BACK THE PASSOVER

Supplies:

- brown construction paper cut into one inch strips
- red construction paper cut into one inch circles. (You will need three strips and one circle for each child.)

This exercise is designed to connect the Passover with the crucifixion.

Give each child three brown strips and have them place them on the table in front of them or on their lap in the form of a doorway. Then ask them what happened at the first Passover. Read the account of Passover from Exodus 12:23-28. Explain to them that the strips of paper represent the door frame. Pass out the red circles and have the children place them on their paper door frame. Ask the children what the red circle represents. They should say the blood of the lamb.

Then read the account of the crucifixion. Tell the children to take their strips and make a cross on their lap. Have them place the red circle on the cross. Now ask them what the red circle represents. They should say the blood of the lamb, Jesus.

Now ask them to tell you how the Passover points to the cross.

Read the following Scriptures to the class to make the point over and over.

Romans 5:9,10
 Ephesians 1:7,8
 Ephesians 2:13
 Hebrews 9:13,14
 1 Peter 1:18,19
 1 John 1:7
 Revelation 1:4-6

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Supplies:

pencil and paper

Draw a picture of the curtain of the temple torn in two. Write the words, "Enter into His presence with confidence!"

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FOR THE OLDER GRADES

COMPAIR

Supplies:

white board

Compare the last words of Christ in each of the Gospels and the final events to form one harmonized picture. Using Matthew's gospel as a baseline add those details not included in Matthew's Gospel that are in the other three. Divide the class loosely into four groups. Each group should look up a different Gospel account. Have the group alert you to differences and list them on the white board.

What is the significance of John's addition, "It is finished?" (The wrath of God being poured out for sin was satisfied and Jesus knew His mission was finished.)

What is the significance of Luke's addition, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (With these words Jesus demonstrated His faithfulness to the Father to the very end. There is no bitterness, only trust. Jesus, having completed the mission, entrusted Himself to the Father.)

A LITTLE BIT MORE

The temple curtain was torn in two. At the moment of Jesus' death, the curtain dividing the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in the temple was torn in two. A barrier between man and God was no longer needed. Colossians 2:14 tells us that Jesus fulfilled the law and cancelled its claim against us. Hebrews 9:7 tells us that only once per year would anyone go behind that curtain and enter the Most Holy Place. Only the High priest could enter and never without the blood which he offered for himself and the sins of the people (see Hebrews 9:7).

Hebrews 9:12 explains that Jesus entered the Most Holy Place by His own blood and obtained eternal redemption. God tore the curtain in two signifying no more sacrifices would ever again be needed. And because Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient for eternal redemption, no barrier between God and man is needed.

