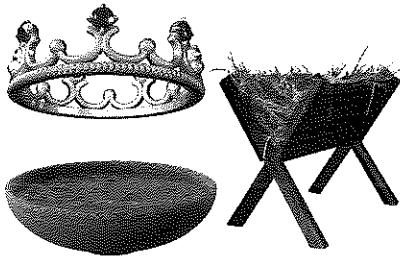


One Story: Crucifixion



Topic

Jesus' crucifixion

Theme

Jesus carried out His mission by dying on the cross, taking the sins of the world upon Himself.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will endeavor to live a holy life, remembering the high cost Christ paid for his sins on the cross.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 15
- Items to use with Not in My Car activity

Scripture Focus

Matt. 27:26–66; Mark 15:15–41; Luke 23:24–56; John 19:26–30

Summary

This lesson traces Jesus' walk toward Golgotha to His time on the cross and what happened when He gave up His spirit and died.

Outline

- I. Toward the Cross
- II. At the Cross
 - A. The scene
 - B. The Savior's words
 1. Father, forgive them
 2. You will be with Me in paradise
 3. Behold your mother!
 4. Why have You forsaken Me?
 5. I thirst
 6. It is finished!
 7. Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit!
- III. Down from the Cross
 - A. Unusual events
 - B. The burial

Memory Verse

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed"
(Isaiah 53:5).

GETTING STARTED

Not in My Car!

Gather an assortment of things that a car owner would most likely not want in his car (e.g., an open jar of pickles, a muddy boot, a piece of chewed gum, a pile of cold French fries, an open container of Cheerios). Have a couple of learners take turns lining up the items according to how willing they would be to let the items in their cars.

ASK: Why might a person want to protect his car from things that could soil it? (Q1) *The car was expensive. The cost gives the car value and makes it worth maintaining.*

ASK: Why might a person not care about what goes in or who gets in his car? (Q2) *The car gets old and worn out. The newness wears off and he doesn't care about it as much.*

ASK: What is the most disgusting thing you have ever found in your car? (Q3)

When most people get a new car they are careful to protect it and keep it nice. But after about 10,000 miles most people start to relax their rules about what they let into their cars.

New believers often will grow quickly in their new relationship with God. They are careful not to allow sin in their lives because they realize the value of their salvation. It is new and exciting. That is how all of us should view our salvation all the time. We should never let the high price Christ paid for our souls become ho-hum news. We should not be comfortable with allowing sin into our lives to soil our relationship with God.

This lesson is about Jesus' death on the cross for us. It will help us understand the value of our salvation and the importance of our relationship with Christ.

Band Protection

ASK: Name three activities, such as stuff a raw turkey, you would not do with your wedding band on?

ASK: Why would you take your wedding band off before doing those activities?

ASK: How would you feel if you damaged or destroyed your wedding band because you neglected to protect it?

A married individual usually values his or her wedding band because it was expensive and because it represents a valuable relationship. This lesson is about Jesus' death on the cross for us. It will help us understand the value of our salvation and the importance of our relationship with Christ. We should never let the

high price Christ paid for our souls become ho-hum news. We should not be comfortable with allowing sin into our lives to soil our relationship with God.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. Toward the Cross

READ: Matthew 27:27–31, 37. **ASK:** What accusation did Pilate's soldiers pick up from the trial? (Q4) *That Jesus planned to become the king of the Jews.*

ASK: How did they mock Jesus? (Q5) *They put a crown of thorns on His head and a reed (to represent a scepter) in His hand. They mockingly bowed to Him.*

After Pilate capitulated to the cries of the mob, *they . . . led him away to crucify him* (Matt. 27:31). The Prisoner—condemned, sentenced, and compelled to carry His own cross to the scene of His execution—was so weakened by beatings and scourging that He collapsed under the burden of the cross. The soldiers seized Simon of Cyrene and forced him to carry the cross to Golgotha (27:32).

No doubt the religious leaders stirred their supporters to keep their passions inflamed against Jesus, but not all the crowd cried out in hatred and opposition to Him. Luke 23:27–31 tells of a great company of people who followed Him, lamenting.

READ: Luke 23:27–31. **ASK:** What was the focus of Jesus' concern? (Q6) *He urged the grieving women to be ready for a terrible time in Jerusalem's history.*

Jesus addressed a group of women. They mourned for Him, but He warned them that destruction was coming and that they ought to mourn for themselves. Jesus was referring to the destruction of Jerusalem at the hand of the Romans.

Remember that when Jesus entered Jerusalem He wept for the city because the people would reject Him and suffer from Roman persecution (19:41–44). Historically Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, about 35 years after Jesus was crucified. The Romans surrounded the city to starve the Jews. The conditions got so bad that the people resorted to cannibalism. That is why being barren was better than having children (23:29). The barren didn't have to witness the tragic deaths of their children. The people of Jerusalem desired to be delivered from the terrible siege. Jesus quoted Hosea who characterized the Jews' desire as calling out to the mountains and hills to fall on them and cover them (23:30; cf. Hos. 10:8).

Jesus called what was happening in His day a *green tree*, which is hard to burn (Luke 23:31). He called the future judgment a *dry [wood]*, which obviously burns easily and quickly, meaning the judgment would be worse than in Jesus' day. So when the Jews demanded the Romans crucify Jesus, they were essentially sealing their own fate as a city. They killed their Deliverer and then suffered at the hands of their accomplice.

Jesus' warning to the grieving women revealed His selfless heart. He didn't want pity for Himself, rather He wanted the people to understand the danger they were in. For beyond the coming destruction of Jerusalem was God's final judgment

Jesus' road was unimaginably difficult, but it would end in joy (Heb. 12:2). There is no end to the torments of final judgment on sin.

on humanity. They needed to know that His death was the hope for their future.

In the procession were two other men, also going to their executions (Luke 23:32). Matthew and Mark called them robbers; Luke called them malefactors (criminals). Very likely they were insurrectionists and murderers like Barabbas. The procession went out of the city to a place called Golgotha.

II. At the Cross

A. The scene

At Golgotha Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh (Mark 15:23). Though some believe the mixture was to dull Jesus' pain, it was probably another means of torture offered by the soldiers. The drink probably tasted terribly bitter as a result of the myrrh.

The soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross and placed a plaque above His head, announcing the charge against Him. It was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (Luke 23:38). Each Gospel records a slightly different wording of the announcement, probably based on whichever language it was translating. However, each language clearly stated the central charge: Jesus claimed to be king of the Jews.

ASK: What was ironic about Jesus' so-called crime? (Q7) *He is the King of the Jews. One day He will return to set up His rule in Israel.*

The soldiers and the religious leaders continued mocking the Lord, as much to stir up the crowd to similar action as to vent their own hatred of Jesus Christ (Matt. 27:39–44). Even the dying criminals on either side Jesus reviled Him and challenged Him to save Himself.

READ: Matthew 27:39–44. **ASK:** Why didn't Jesus prove He is God's Son by coming down off the cross? (Q8) *Because saving Himself from death would have condemned the world forever. There could be no salvation without Christ's substitutionary death.*

READ: Matthew 12:39, 40. **ASK:** What sign Jesus did Jesus give that proved He is God's Son? (Q9) *The sign of Jonah, meaning His resurrection.*

B. The Savior's words

The Bible does not provide many details of Jesus Christ's suffering on the cross. The Word of God does, however, record Jesus' words. These seven statements fulfilled the prophecies that revealed what the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, would say and think.

The seven words from the cross fall into three divisions. The first three register His concern for others. The next two are about His sufferings. The last two are His remarkable cries of victory.

1. Father, forgive them

The first statement was *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do* (Luke 23:34), a prayer of compassion for humanity. Was Jesus absolving those

responsible for His crucifixion? No! Ignorance is not a basis for pardon. Instead He prayed that their ignorance, their wicked action, their failure to see the obvious would be forgiven. How could that be?

Forgive means to give away, to send away, discharge or let go. At the Last Supper, Jesus said, *This is my blood . . . which is shed for many for the remission of sins* (Matt. 26:28). Forgiveness is based on atonement, the putting away of sin. God forgives through Jesus Christ, for He *hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin* (2 Cor. 5:21). God does not ignore sin or treat it as of no consequence. Righteousness accuses sinners; truth condemns us. We need mercy to have peace, and God Himself through Jesus Christ made that provision. As Jesus prayed, He was asking for those around Him and for all sinners to have a basis for receiving pardon for their sins through His sacrificial offering.

2. You will be with Me in paradise

The second statement from the cross illustrates the power of God's forgiveness as Christ interacted with the thieves hanging to His left and right.

READ: Luke 23:39. **ASK:** What kind of salvation did the first thief want? (Q10)

Deliverance from his sentence. He wanted to be able to get off His cross and go home.

The first thief failed to see that He was not only condemned for his crime, but that he was also condemned for being a sinner. He mocked Jesus for not saving the three of them, concluding that Jesus was not Who He said He was. The first thief rejected the truth that Jesus was providing him with the opportunity to be saved from his sins by staying on the cross and dying.

The repentant thief confessed to his own sin guilt and recognized in Jesus a Person of righteous character Who was innocent of the charges made against Him (Luke 23:40, 41). Crying for help, he asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom. Jesus turned to the repentant thief and promised, *To day shalt thou be with me in paradise* (Luke 23:43).

The unrepentant thief was a sinner. Sin was in him, and because he wouldn't believe on Jesus, his sin was on him (Rom. 6:23a). Jesus has no sin nature; He did not sin; He could not sin. But on the cross, He took the sin of the world upon Himself (2 Cor. 5:21). The repentant thief was a sinner, but because he believed on Jesus, his sin was on Jesus, not on himself (John 3:18).

3. Behold your mother!

The third statement from the cross conveyed Jesus' love for His mother (John 19:26, 27). In the hour of His great agony, He did not forget His human relationships. He transferred His role in the family to His faithful disciple, John, who would understand better than Jesus' unbelieving siblings what Mary might need in the days to come (John 7:5).

READ: John 13:23. **ASK:** What special relationship with Jesus made John a good candidate to take care of Mary? (Q11) *John was the disciple whom Jesus loved.*

4. Why have You forsaken Me?

The fourth statement expressed Jesus' deep anguish (Matt. 27:46, 47). He did not speak of His suffering until He had hung on the cross for six hours, three of

them in total darkness. The prophetic statement in Psalm 22:1, sometimes called the psalm of crucifixion, underlines the significance of Jesus' statement. Jesus asked God why He had forsaken Him. Galatians 3:13 provides an answer.

READ: Galatians 3:13. **ASK:** Why did God forsake Jesus on the cross? (Q12)
So Jesus could become a curse for us.

Hebrews 2:9 tells us that Jesus Christ tasted *death for every man*. This refers to spiritual death, or separation from God. Christ did not dread physical death; He dreaded this alienation from the Father. It caused Him great anguish.

We don't know details about the separation of Jesus from the Father. The Bible doesn't fill us in. But we don't need to know them. We simply need to know that the separation was a cause of great suffering for Jesus and that Jesus sufficiently paid the penalty for our sins in the process (Rom. 3:21–26).

5. I thirst

Jesus Christ's fifth statement from the cross was only one word in Greek meaning *I thirst* (John 19:28). More than eighteen hours without sleep, food, or drink had passed since His arrest in Gethsemane. He had been scourged and beaten. His throat, mouth, and lips would have been parched. Talking would have been difficult, and Christ had important words yet to utter. Those nearby responded to Jesus and gave Him wine vinegar to drink by means of a sponge (19:29, 30).

6. It is finished!

The sixth statement was a note of triumph: *It is finished!* (John 19:30). Jesus Christ had paid the full and final payment for our redemption. The sacrifices under the Mosaic law had only covered sin, not taken it away. They were promissory notes for redemption until the better sacrifice would be provided. Christ had come to take away sins by His sacrifice.

READ: Hebrews 9:23–26. **ASK:** What key word in verse 26 shows that Jesus' sacrifice was the last sacrifice for sin and that it never needs repeated? (Q13)
Once.

7. Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit!

With a loud voice Jesus uttered the seventh statement, dismissing His spirit (Luke 23:46). He remained master of the situation. This phrase, anticipated in Psalm 31:5, expressed trust in God. In crucifixion the Lord Jesus Christ mastered death and confidently faced the future.

III. Down from the Cross

A. Unusual events

An unnatural darkness had begun at noon and continued for three hours, the first of several events that brought fear to the watchers near the cross (Matt. 27:45). At the final cry of Jesus Christ, the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple tore in two from top to bottom (27:51). That veil had represented the barrier separating mankind from God. Jesus' death tore the barrier away.

Matthew recorded that a great earthquake occurred, breaking open many

tombs (27:52, 53). Some of the dead were raised to life and walked the streets of Jerusalem after Jesus Christ's resurrection.

READ: Matthew 27:54. **ASK:** What impression did the events surrounding Christ's final breath make on one of the Roman centurions? (Q14) *The centurion recognized Jesus as the Son of God.*

We don't know if the centurion put his faith in Jesus for salvation, but at least his heart was open to the truth about Jesus. As he reflected on all that happened that day, he certainly saw the events from a completely different perspective. Jesus was not just a weak, delusional man who could not defend himself. Jesus is the Son of God and He died with a purpose. Finding out what that purpose was may have driven the centurion to find out more about Jesus. Perhaps he even met Christ and trusted Him after Christ rose from the dead.

B. The burial

According to Jewish law, a criminal had to be buried before sundown on the day he died (Deut. 21:22, 23). So Joseph of Arimathaea claimed Jesus' body and got permission from Pilate to bury the body in his own tomb. He rolled a heavy stone across the opening and left Him.

Matthew 27:62–66 tells us that the Jews, hearing of this burial arrangement, took precautions to ensure that nothing would disturb that tomb. They wanted the disciples to have no way of claiming that Jesus rose again after three days. Those religious leaders thought the disciples might attempt to steal the body, but they may also have remembered that Jesus had brought the dead back to life. They were taking no chances.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Salvation Opportunity

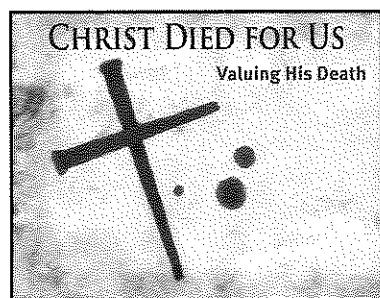
If you have unsaved class members, use this opportunity to present the plan of salvation and to urge them to make a salvation decision. (Q15)

Value Your Salvation

ASK: How comfortable have you become with allowing sin into your life? (Q16)

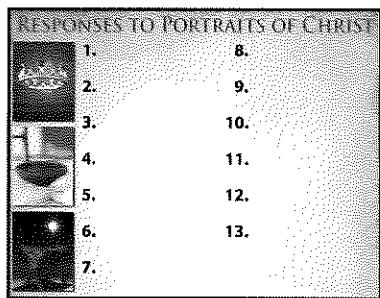
ASK: How has the reminder of the high price of your salvation affected your desire to live holy? (Q17)

RESOURCE: Display resource 15. **ASK:** What positive habits might we need to incorporate into our lives that would help us value our salvation? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q18) *Consistent Bible study; regular review of the price Christ paid for our salvation; daily praise to God for salvation; praying for the lost; asking God for wisdom in sharing the gospel.*



Devotional Thoughts

Hymn writers often capture our thoughts in soul-searching ways. Ask learners to read stanzas from the following hymns: "Saved by the Blood"; "Nothing But the Blood"; "There Is a Fountain"; "Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed"; "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross".



Summary and Memory Verse

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 12 or use the following: Value Christ's death by living a holy life.

Encourage learners to memorize Isaiah 53:5. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.