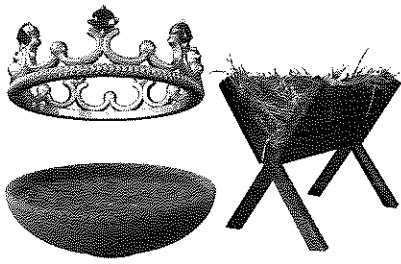


One Story: Resurrection and Ascension



Topic

Jesus' resurrection and ascension

Theme

Jesus Christ arose from the grave victorious over sin and death.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider how the resurrection provides motivation for godly living and will rejoice in the security of eternal life.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 16

Scripture Focus

Matt. 27:55–28:20; Mark 15:39–16:20; Luke 23:47–24:53; John 20:1–18; Acts 1:4–11

Summary

This lesson considers the sufficiency of Jesus' death, as attested through His resurrection. It refutes theories against a literal bodily resurrection. Finally, it considers some of the effects of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Outline

- I. Jesus Is Buried
- II. Jesus Rises from the Dead
- III. Jesus Appears to His Followers
 - A. To the women
 - B. To the travelers
 - C. To the disciples
- IV. Jesus Commissions His Disciples
- V. Jesus Ascends to Heaven

Memory Verse

"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"
(1 Corinthians 15:20–22).

GETTING STARTED

Everything's Becoming Disposable

Organize the learners into groups of three. Count couples as one person. Have the groups count, or estimate, the number of times they have replaced a major appliance (e.g., refrigerator, washer, dryer, microwave). Have each group report what their grand total is for their group. Give condolences to the group with the highest number.

ASK: Do you think the life expectancies of today's appliances are longer or shorter than they were twenty-five years ago? (Q1)

ASK: How do you feel when you have to replace an appliance that doesn't seem that old? (Q2)

Unfortunately we have to come to expect things in life to be short-lived and disposable. While that is frustrating we can rejoice in that the things that really matter in life are forever. Jesus rose from the dead nearly 2,000 years ago, and the power of His resurrection is still going strong. Jesus died once and then rose from the grave to secure our salvation forever. This lesson is about Jesus' resurrection, a tremendous reason to rejoice in an increasingly disposable world.

BC/AD

ASK: What do BC and AD mean literally? *Before Christ and anno Domini, in the year of our Lord.*

On the board, draw a timeline with the cross in the middle. Write some dates on the left of the cross (e.g., 1000 BC, 50 BC). Point out that the BC comes closest to the cross when you write the date. Write some dates on the right side of the cross (e.g., AD 50, AD 2000). Point out that the AD comes closest to the cross when you write the date. For hundreds of years our calendar has silently testified to the reality of Jesus as a historical person.

In this lesson we will consider the historical accuracy of Jesus Christ's literal resurrection from the dead and the resurrection's implications for our lives.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. Jesus Is Buried

READ: Galatians 1:4; 2:20; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14. **ASK:** What do these passages reveal about Jesus' death? (Q3) *He gave Himself.*

Jesus' last words on the cross were, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit* (Luke 23:46); then Scripture tells us, *He yielded up his spirit. Yielded*

up literally means *sent away*. None of the Gospels say *he died* when referring to that scene on the cross. He was not executed; no human could take His life from Him. He did not die as others die, as a defeat, but as the lone Victor over sin and death. He *gave himself for our sins*. After His death, God directed two men to care for Jesus' body.

READ: Matthew 27:57–60; Mark 15:42–46; Luke 23:50–53. **ASK:** What does the Bible tell us about Joseph of Arimathea? (Q4) *He was rich; a follower of Christ, albeit a secret one; he owned a tomb; he was bold; he was an honorable member of the council (Sanhedrin) who did not consent to the council's decisions regarding Christ.*

Joseph of Arimathea, no doubt fearing that enemies would desecrate Jesus' body, hurried to ask Pilate's permission to bury the body. He took Jesus' body and wrapped it in clean linen cloth with spices that Nicodemus had brought (John 19:38, 39). Joseph and Nicodemus carried the body to the tomb that Joseph had prepared for his own family. Then they rolled the stone door into place.

READ: Matthew 27:62–66. **ASK:** What precautions did Pilate and the Jewish rulers take to ensure the integrity of the tomb? (Q5) *They set a guard at the tomb and sealed the tomb.*

ASK: Why did they want to ensure the integrity of the tomb? (Q6) *They were afraid Jesus' disciples would steal His body.*

Notice that it is again the religious leaders in Israel who appealed to the state to help them in their efforts to snuff out Christ (Matt. 27:62). They had previously led in getting the Romans to sentence Jesus to death. After His death, they appealed to the Romans to make sure the claims of Christ stayed buried in His tomb. They didn't want His disciples faking a resurrection. Yet it was eventually the Romans, not Christ or His disciples, who destroyed Jerusalem and stripped the Jewish religious leaders of their power (cf. Luke 19:41–44).

II. Jesus Rises from the Dead

As Mary Magdalene and other women came to the tomb to anoint Jesus, they were worried about who might roll the stone away for them (Mark 16:1–3). But before they got there, an earthquake shook the ground. An angel appeared and rolled back the stone that had sealed the entrance to the tomb (Matt. 28:2). The earthquake and the angel's brightness frightened the guards so that they fainted in terror and were useless in keeping anyone, not even a few women, from entering the tomb (28:3, 4). The display of God's power and the appearance of His angels made the Roman guards and the empire they represented look rather silly. When the guards came to, they found the tomb empty and fled to alert the chief priests.

READ: Matthew 28:11–15. **ASK:** How did the elders and chief priests plan to

cover up what happened at Jesus' tomb? (Q7) *They paid off the soldiers and told them to lie about the disciples stealing Jesus' body.*

ASK: What does this account reveal about the true desires of the elders and chief priests? (Q8) *They were not at all interested in the things of God. Their religion was self-focused. Preserving their power and authority was more important to them than the truth.*

When the women drew near the tomb, they noticed it was open and presumably empty (John 20:1). Apparently Mary Magdalene turned around right away to run and tell Peter and John that Jesus' body was missing and no one knew where it was (20:2). As she left, the rest of the women went on to the tomb and went in it. Inside the tomb the angels told the women not to fear and that Jesus had risen from the dead (Matt. 28:5, 6; Luke 24:5, 6). They reminded the women of Jesus' words about His death and resurrection. The women remembered the words and left to tell the disciples the good news (Luke 24:7–9). They apparently returned to Jerusalem and learned that Mary Magdalene had left for the tomb with Peter and John. So the women waited in Jerusalem for Peter and John to return.

When Peter and John got to the tomb with Mary Magdalene, the two disciples went into the tomb and saw the grave clothes but apparently no angels (John 20:3–7). John believed Jesus was resurrected, though Peter wondered (Luke 24:12; John 20:8, 9). The two disciples returned to Jerusalem (John 20:10) and apparently met up with the women who had talked to the angels. The women gave their report and then left to tell their account to the rest of the disciples in Bethany. At about that same time, Cleopas and another follower of Jesus left to go to Emmaus (Luke 24:13). They had heard the reports of the angels from the women and of the empty tomb and grave clothes from Peter and John (Luke 24:22–24), but not any news from Mary Magdalene, who had not yet returned from the tomb.

Luke 24:10 is an example of a telescoped account. Luke reported that all the women, including Mary Magdalene, gave accounts to the apostles as if the accounts happened all at once. But those reports didn't happen simultaneously and the information shared grew after Jesus eventually appeared to all of the women. Luke was in essence setting up the account of the two men on the road to Emmaus, which climaxed with the first appearance of the resurrected Jesus in Luke's Gospel.

III. Jesus Appears to His Followers

A. To the women

Mary Magdalene stayed at the tomb weeping after Peter and John left. When she looked in the tomb, she saw the two men in white (angels) sitting where Jesus had been laid (John 20:11, 12). They asked Mary why she was crying. She shared that she did not know where Jesus' body had been taken. She then turned and saw Jesus, but she didn't know it was Him. Jesus revealed Himself to her (Mark 16:9), and she clung to Him. Jesus sent her to His disciples to tell them that He would be ascending to the Father. Mary Magdalene returned to Jerusalem where she told Peter and John that she had seen the risen Lord (Luke 24:10; John 20:13–17).

As mentioned, the rest of the women had already left for Bethany to tell the rest of the disciples about their encounter with the angels at the empty tomb. So they missed Mary Magdalene's report. They essentially had old

news. But on their way to Bethany, Jesus appeared to them (Matt. 28:8–10). The women grabbed ahold of Jesus. He told them not to be afraid but to tell the disciples to go to Galilee. They would see Him there.

B. To the travelers

Presumably sometime after Jesus appeared to the women, He appeared to Cleopas and his companion as they traveled to Emmaus, though Jesus kept His identity hidden from their eyes as they walked (Luke 24:15, 16). Their interaction with Jesus reveals how Jesus' followers in general felt while Jesus was lying in the grave.

DRAMA: Have four actors read and act out the parts of Jesus, the two disciples, and the narrator (Luke 24:13–21). Their facial expressions, posture, words, and tone of voice should convey the disciples' dismay, discouragement, and defeat. They should appear shattered.

Between the time of Jesus' burial and the resurrection lay long, bleak hours of despair for the disciples. It seemed impossible that Jesus, the Miracle Worker, could not save Himself from His enemies. They puzzled over why He had kept so silent. Their hopes for the kingdom were shattered (Luke 24:13–21). Even the reports of the interactions with angels didn't yet give some of them confidence that Jesus had risen from the dead (24:22–24). (Remember that the two men on the road to Emmaus had not yet heard of Jesus' resurrection appearances.)

READ: Luke 24:25–27. **ASK:** How did Jesus help the men understand Who He was? (Q9) *He used the Old Testament Scriptures to explain why He had to suffer and die.*

Jesus eventually revealed Himself to the men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:30, 31). The two men then went to Jesus' disciples who had gathered in Jerusalem to report that they had seen Jesus (24:33–35). Apparently the women had made it to Bethany, told the rest of the disciples of all they had seen, and returned with the disciples to Jerusalem where they met up with Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene.

C. To the disciples

While the disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem, Jesus appeared to them. His sudden appearance terrified them. They thought they saw a spirit (Luke 24:36, 37). Jesus immediately addressed their doubts.

READ: Luke 24:38, 39. **ASK:** How did Jesus help the disciples understand that He was really there in His flesh and blood body? (Q10) *He invited His disciples to touch Him and eat with Him.*

After seeing the resurrected Christ, the disciples tried to understand all that had transpired. Jesus helped them by teaching them how the events over the last few days were revealed in the Scriptures (Luke 24:44, 45).

ASK: What might a successful harmonizing of the various accounts of Christ's resurrection show about the authenticity of the accounts? (Q11) *The accounts must be authentic. No one would fabricate one account and report it so differently, yet harmoniously, in each Gospel. A fabricated account would most likely be nearly identical in all four Gospels.*

IV. Jesus Commissions His Disciples

READ: Luke 24:46, 47; 1 Corinthians 15:14–19. **ASK:** What is the connection between the resurrection of Christ and the gospel? (Q12) *The gospel hinges on the resurrection. Without the resurrection, there is no gospel.*

Jesus told His disciples that they were to be witnesses of Him (Luke 24:48). In other words, their lives would be changed radically. They had a mission to complete on Christ's behalf.

After appearing to over five hundred other people over the course of forty days (1 Cor. 15:4–7; Acts 1:3), Jesus appeared to His disciples again (Matt. 28:16, 17). This time it was on a mountain in Galilee, where He said He would meet them (26:32). Those who *doubted* were probably questioning whether the Person appearing to them was Jesus. None of the disciples doubted Jesus once He began to speak about His mission for them.

Jesus rightfully claimed that all authority had been given to Him. Based on that authority He told the disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching the new believers all that Jesus had commanded. He then added that He would be with the disciples always (28:18–20).

Later Jesus appeared to the disciples one last time near Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. They asked Jesus if He was going to restore His kingdom to Israel at that time (Acts 1:6). Jesus answered that it wasn't time yet; then He gave more details related to the commissioning of His disciples. He explained that they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and then the uttermost ends of the earth. He also explained that the Spirit would come upon them to give them the power to carry out their mission. Jesus would be with His disciples through the Holy Spirit (1:8). Without His guidance, their task would have been impossible. He also revealed to them that He was going to Heaven to make it possible for them to have an *open door* to God's throne in their times of need (Heb. 4:16; 9:24).

ASK: Is taking the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth still a mission for today's church? Explain. (Q13) *Yes. Jesus still expects the gospel to reach all people.*

V. Jesus Ascends to Heaven

Jesus ascended to Heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9; Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51). After He was out of sight, two angels promised the disciples that He would return (Acts 1:11). At that time *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea* (Isa. 11:9).

The disciples returned to Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus promised, the Spirit empowered them and changed their lives. Jesus' resurrection had turned the course of their lives forever. When the disciples saw Jesus being arrested, they forsook Him and fled, fearing they would be included (Matt. 26:56). Peter then denied Him three times, refusing to be identified as a follower of Jesus. When the grim news came of His death, they hid behind closed doors for fear of the Jews (John 20:19). With their Leader gone, they were disorganized and incapable of continuing any ministry. Their future seemed limited to a patchwork reconstruction of their former lives.

After the resurrection, however, they became bold in the power of the Spirit to challenge the very crowd who had crucified Christ. Peter preached boldly about Christ to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost: *Him . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death. . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ* (Acts 2:23, 24, 36). Three thousand people were converted at the first preaching of the message that Jesus was crucified and risen. Within a few days another five thousand men were converted, and a great company of priests were converted. The book of Acts describes the remarkable power of the message. The local church was established at Jerusalem, and others followed with a church-planting ministry that carries the same message today.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

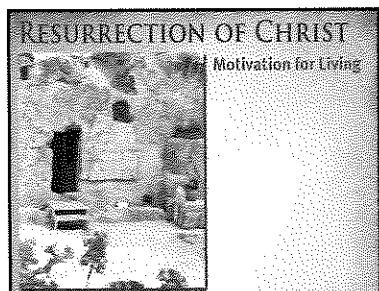
Motivation for Living

The apostle Paul closed his magnificent chapter on the resurrection by reminding us of the tremendous victory won for us through our Lord Jesus Christ. He then challenged believers to remember that Jesus Christ's resurrection is not just a doctrine to believe but a motivation for life, as it was for the apostles and the early church: *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord* (1 Cor. 15:58).

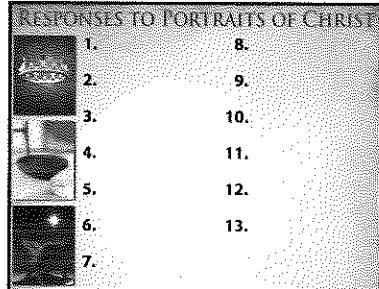
RESOURCE: Display resource 16. **ASK:** How is the resurrection a motivation for living today? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q14) *It gives us confidence that we have eternal life; it gives our service for God meaning; it helps us persevere in times of trial; it allows us to face death without fear.*

Resurrection Rejoicing

Spend some time rejoicing that Jesus rose from the grave and guaranteed all believers eternal life. Have learners pray short prayers of rejoicing and thanksgiving. (Q15)



Summary and Memory Verses



RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 13 or use the following: Rejoice in Jesus' victory over sin and death. Take time to review the lessons from the synoptic Gospels. Challenge the learners to follow through on what they have learned through their study. (Q16)

Encourage learners to memorize 1 Corinthians 15:20–22. Give them an opportunity to say the verses in class next week.