



SUNDAY, MARCH 31ST

Series Title: Passion For the Reach

Lesson Title: The Easter / Resurrection Story

Key Scripture

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

On Easter, or Resurrection Sunday, we celebrate what is the most important event in all of human history: Jesus rising from the dead. All of Christianity and all eternity hinges on the truth of the resurrection.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then our faith is lacking in meaning and is just another interesting philosophy. But if the resurrection is true, then it is the clearest proof that Jesus is exactly who He claimed to be – the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

All of the evidence points to the truth of the resurrection, and the result is changed lives. Let's dive into both the big and seemingly smaller events of the story of Easter and understand how each is significant to the entire redemption story.

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

As the evening began, after Jesus and His disciples had celebrated the Passover, Jesus went with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:38-46

38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

46 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

JESUS IS BETRAYED AND ARRESTED

During the meal of the Last Supper Jesus predicts that “one of you will betray me” referring to Judas. Judas leaves the supper and goes to the Roman authorities who are looking to arrest Jesus. He accepts a bribe of 30 pieces of silver and agrees to take the soldiers to Jesus. Judas knew that Jesus and the disciples would go to a garden near Jerusalem and led the soldiers there, stating “Whoever it is I kiss, he is the one; take him into custody, and lead him away under guard.”

Leading the group into the garden, Judas sees Jesus with his disciples and approaches him.

Matthew 26:49-50

And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him.

Other Accounts:

When the soldiers approached Jesus to take Him, Peter cut off one of the soldiers' ears. Jesus healed it.

JESUS PUT ON TRIAL (Luke 23)

After Judas betrayed Jesus by kissing Him on the cheek, the chief priests, officers, and elders who were there had Jesus arrested. The next day they asked Jesus, "Are You the Son of God?" Jesus replied, "You are right in saying that I am." Upon hearing that, they took Jesus to Pilate to be sentenced for the crimes of not paying taxes and blasphemy. Pilate questioned Jesus, but did not find any reasons for the charges and tried to set Him free. However, the people insisted all the more. They began to yell, "Crucify Him" over and over.

There was no legal reason for Jesus to be crucified. Yet, it was God's will that Jesus die on our behalf to take away our sin. There was no stopping the plan of God, no matter how painful.

Other Accounts:

- Jesus was taken to more than one judgment hall, but no one could find any reason why He should be crucified.
- Every year, the Romans were required to release a prisoner of the people's choice back into society. The people chose to release Barabbas, a murderer, instead of Jesus. Pilate was so against their choice, he washed his hands to indicate that Jesus' innocent blood was not on his hands.

THE CRUCIFIXION

Crucifixion is a death sentence, carried out by nailing or tying the hands and feet to a wooden beam and leaving the person to hang there until death by exhaustion or asphyxiation. The crucifixion Jesus endured was even more brutal than the typical punishment for criminals. He was given a cape, crown of thorns, beaten along the way, mocked and humiliated and forced to carry His own cross. While a crucifixion was an execution, it was also a public humiliation, by making the condemned as vulnerable as possible.

Jesus hung on the cross for about six hours, from approximately 9 am to 3 pm. During that time, soldiers cast lots for Jesus' clothing while people passed by shouting insults and scoffing. From the cross, Jesus spoke to his mother Mary and the disciple John. He also cried out to his Father, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" (**Mark 15:25-34**)

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

Jesus dies upon the cross. At that moment, darkness covered the land. As Jesus breathed his final agonizing breath, an earthquake shook the ground, ripping the temple veil in two from top to bottom. Matthew's Gospel (NIV) says in **Chapter 27, verses 51-52**, "The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life."

It was typical for Roman soldiers to show mercy by breaking the criminal's legs, causing death to come more quickly. But when the soldiers came to Jesus, he was already dead. Instead of breaking his legs, they pierced his side. Before sunset, Jesus was taken down by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea and laid in Joseph's tomb.

A large stone covered the entrance and soldiers guarded the sealed tomb. Their fear was that the friends of Jesus would steal the body to give the appearance of a resurrection.

Other Accounts:

- John 19:36 tells us that Jesus' legs not being broken is fulfillment of a prophecy found in Psalms 34:20. It says, He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

JESUS HAS RISEN

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!” **(Luke 24:5-6)**

The resurrection story is the account of Jesus Christ rising from the dead after being crucified on the cross and buried in a tomb. It is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine and the foundation of Christian hope.

Through the resurrection, Jesus conquered sin and death. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." **(John 11:25-26, NKJV)**

Without the resurrection, Jesus could have been thought of as simply a great teacher and a good man. But after He rose from the dead, His followers knew for certain that He was who He had claimed to be—the resurrection and the life, the Savior of the world.

All over the world, churches are filled with worshipers because there is an empty tomb in Jerusalem.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT
SUNDAY, MARCH 31ST**

1. Why did Jesus say that the disciples should watch and pray?

2. Who betrayed Jesus by revealing Him to the Roman authorities?

3. What was the price paid for the betrayal?

4. What did Jesus call His betrayer when he kissed Him?

5. Why did Pilate try to set Jesus free?

6. What action did Pilate take to show that he was not in agreement with punishing an innocent man?

7. Approximately how long did Jesus hang on the cross?

8. What question did Jesus ask His Father (God) while on the cross?

9. List one of the supernatural events that took place when Jesus died.

10. Why didn't the soldiers break Jesus' legs?

11. What is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine and the foundation of Christian hope?

12. Who is the resurrection and the life...the Savior of the world?
