

"JUST AS HE SAID"

MAIN POINT.

Jesus's crucifixion exposes the depth of our sin, but His resurrection erases our debt.



CHRIST CONNECTION

As the people crucified Jesus, He asked the Father to forgive them (Luke 23:34). Though Jesus never sinned, He paid the debt for our sin by His death on the cross. Everyone who confesses Jesus as Lord and repents of sin can experience forgiveness and eternity with God.



RESURRECTED LIFE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Matthew 27—Matthew 28

OUR DEBT WAS GREAT

MATTHEW 27:27-31,35-37,45-51

27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's residence and gathered the whole company around him. 28 They stripped him and dressed him in a scarlet robe. 29 They twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and placed a staff in his right hand. And they knelt down before him and mocked him: "Hail, king of the Jews!" 30 Then they spat on him, took the staff, and kept hitting him on the head. 31 After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him. . . . 35 After crucifying him, they divided his clothes by casting lots. 36 Then they sat down and were guarding him there. 37 Above his head they put up the charge against him in writing: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. . . . 45 From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the whole land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling for Elijah."

48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and offered him a drink. 49 But the rest said, "Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

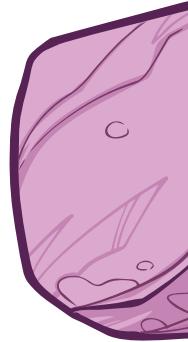
50 But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. 51 Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split.

OUR HOPE IS GREATER

MATTHEW 28:1-10

1 After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. 4 The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men. 5 The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.' Listen, I have told you." 8 So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell his disciples the news. 9 Just then Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" They came up, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus told them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."

BEFORE YOU TEACH



MAIN POINT.

Jesus's crucifixion exposes the depth of our sin, but His resurrection erases our debt.

Leaders: The cross and the empty tomb must shape how we live. When we live "alive with Christ" (Eph. 2:5), we exhibit God's power to transform anyone who calls on Jesus for salvation.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

OUR DEBT WAS GREAT

MATTHEW 27:45-46

"Jesus experienced the wrath of God, and not just for a moment, but for hours. Shrouded by darkness and seared with pain, He experienced the cup of God's wrath. In addition, this was also a cry of relational alienation. In a mysterious way, Christ was alienated not only from His friends, but also from the Father. This is the curse of the cross (see also Gal. 3:13). As He came under the sentence of sin, Jesus was cut off from the Father's favorable presence. God's presence was real at the cross, but it was His presence in judgment and wrath toward sin."

David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 352.

MATTHEW 27:46

"That Jesus utters the complaint of the righteous sufferer (Ps. 22:1) suggests that he participated in our ultimate alienation from God in experiencing the pain of death. Yet he would also know that the psalm goes on to declare the psalmist's triumph (Ps. 22:22-24), and the phrase my God indicates continuing trust."

Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, vol. 1, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), Mt 27:45-46.

OUR HOPE IS GREATER

MATTHEW 28:1-10

"The women were unlikely witnesses to the resurrection because (in general) their testimonies weren't highly valued in that culture (Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 698-99). If Matthew and the other Gospel writers were trying to persuade people of a hoax, then choosing two women as the first eyewitnesses to the empty tomb was a strange choice. If you were going to make up a story about the most significant miracle the world has ever known, would you put forward questionable witnesses as evidence?"

David Platt, *Exalting Jesus in Matthew*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 357.



CONTEXT

People sometimes accept the idea of Jesus dying as a sacrifice for sin but feel more tension surrounding His resurrection. Explanations for rejecting Jesus's resurrection began the very morning it occurred: It was a misunderstanding, a hoax, a crime. Soldiers guarded Jesus's tomb at Pilate's command; they experienced an earthquake and saw an angel dressed in white with an appearance like lightening; they fell to the ground like dead men (Matt. 28:2-4). When they ran to tell the chief priests what they saw, they were paid to spread a lie: The disciples stole Jesus's body. Here's the truth: If Jewish and Roman leaders really could've disproved the resurrection, then they would have done so. They simply needed to produce Jesus's body to stop all rumors, but they couldn't. Because a few disciples didn't overpower a unit of trained Roman guards. Because Jesus rose! Because He appeared to hundreds (2 Cor. 15:5-6). Because Jesus has authority over life and death and sin. Since these things are true, He has authority over us.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

Aspects of the Atonement

The death of Jesus on our behalf stands at the center of His atoning work—His work to cover our sin debt. Without this work, there is no gospel (1 Cor. 15:3). While His death as a substitute for ours is central to the atonement, His death also supremely demonstrates God's love for sinners (John 15:13; 1 John 4:10). It shows us how seriously God takes sin. It satisfies every requirement for God to forgive the failures of humanity. And it puts Jesus's ultimate victory over sin, Satan, and death on display through His resurrection (Col. 2:15). Every part of the atonement should inspire gratitude, praise, and a desire for obedience because it is only through Jesus that we are restored to a right relationship with God.

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, HELP US TO LIVE IN A WAY THAT HONORS YOUR SON'S SACRIFICE. BECAUSE YOU RESURRECTED JESUS FROM THE GRAVE, WE GET TO WALK IN NEW LIFE. THANK YOU FOR SENDING JESUS TO DEFEAT SIN AND DEATH SO THAT WE CAN COME CLOSE TO YOU AND LIVE WITH YOU FOREVER.



KICK STARTER

RATE IT!

If you are falsely accused, how likely are you to speak up (1=I'm staying quiet, 10=I'm not taking the fall)?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

SUBSTITUTE

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHEN HAVE YOU HAD TO STAND IN SOMEONE ELSE'S PLACE AS A SUBSTITUTE (EX. ON A TEAM, FOR A PROJECT, IN A PERFORMANCE)?**
- **IN WHAT KINDS OF SITUATIONS WOULD YOU WANT SOMEONE TO TAKE YOUR PLACE (EX. CHORES, PUNISHMENT, SICKNESS, BEING LEFT OUT)?**
- **WHEN WOULD YOU RATHER NOT LET SOMEONE STAND IN YOUR PLACE (EX. MAKING A GOOD GRADE, RECEIVING AN AWARD, BEING GIVEN A LOT OF MONEY)?**

In some cases, letting someone else take your place is a perk. If you're pitching in a ballgame and can't throw a strike, then being relieved by another pitcher takes pressure off your shoulders. If you made a mistake, then letting someone else take the punishment might feel good. But we usually don't want someone else to stand in our place when it comes to receiving something good, like money, an award, or attention. Today, we'll learn that Jesus was our substitute. He stood in our place, took our blame, and paid our debt so that we could live.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Have you ever thought you knew what was true but then questioned yourself because of someone else's opinion? Or maybe you've said or heard this phrase: "What's true for you might not be true for me." In an effort to be accepted or not to feel awkward, people will follow this way of thinking when it comes to faith in Jesus—a "you do you and I'll do me" mindset. Let's think about this for a minute. By its very nature, truth implies two choices: what is fact and what is false, what is true and what is untrue. But when it comes to believing God's Word and placing faith in Jesus—trusting in Him for salvation because of His death and resurrection—neutral ground doesn't exist. We actually must make a choice: What Scripture says about Jesus is either true or untrue. You want the truth? You'll find it in God's Word and in the person, Jesus—not just truth for believers and preachers and certain types of people who are raised a certain way. But truth for all people, for all time. God sent His Son, Jesus. He lived. He died. He rose again. He is truth (John 14:6).

DISCUSSION



MAIN POINT.

Jesus's crucifixion exposes the depth of our sin, but His resurrection erases our debt.

OUR DEBT WAS GREAT

READ MATTHEW 27:27-31,35-37,45-51



HOW DOES IT FEEL TO OWE SOMEONE MONEY OR A FAVOR? DO WE OWE GOD? HOW DO WE TRY TO PAY FOR OUR SIN?

If you've ever owed money or a favor to a friend, a parent, or a sibling, then you know how debt can weigh you down, especially if the debt is great. Sometimes, we can work off our debt by cleaning, mowing the lawn, or babysitting for free. In time, the person frees us from the obligation. When it comes to our sin, the debt is too great. The debt is astronomical, really. We can't work enough or be good enough to pay God. Why? **The payment, or "wages," for sin is death (Rom. 6:23)**—a perfect, pure sacrifice. We needed a substitute: Jesus.



CIRCLE THE WORDS THAT STICK OUT TO YOU IN THE PASSAGE. WHAT DO THESE DETAILS SHOW US ABOUT GOD'S VIEW OF SIN? HOW SHOULD WE VIEW IT?

The details of Jesus's death are violent. He endured tremendous pain for our sin. God allowed Jesus to absorb the wrath we deserved; He erased our debt because it rested on Jesus instead. God sent His Son because He loves us deeply (John 3:16). **But because God is holy and righteous, He hates sin deeply; it opposes His goodness, separates us from Him, and results in our death.** Jesus submitted Himself to death to defeat death for us. **A right understanding of Jesus's radical sacrifice must result in our grateful worship; a right understanding of our sin must result in a desire to flee from it.**



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MOCK SOMEONE? THE PEOPLE MOCKED JESUS'S AUTHORITY AS KING. HOW CAN THE WAY WE LIVE MOCK HIS AUTHORITY TOO?

The people watching Jesus's crucifixion knew the accusation brought against Him: blasphemy for claiming kingship (Mark 15:2). For Jewish religious leaders, the charge was even more serious: Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God (Mark 14:60-62). The charge was clear because posting the crime above the criminal's head was common practice. In Jesus's case, the charge above His head said, "The King of the Jews" (Mark 15:26). The gospel writers recorded that leaders, soldiers, passersby, and other criminals being crucified mocked Jesus in His death. They verbally insulted Him, spat on Him, beat Him. The King of kings, the Son of God who has all authority in heaven and on earth, submitted Himself to this treatment for our sake. While we may not mock Jesus in the same way, we must examine if our lives mock His authority. **If our lives could speak, would they say, "He has no rule over me" or "He can't have this part of my life"? As believers, we represent our King. Our lives do speak; the way we live reveals who is enthroned in our heart. We either elevate Jesus as King for all to see or we live in a way which mocks His authority, making ourselves "kings" over our own frail kingdoms.**

OUR HOPE IS GREATER

READ MATTHEW 28:1-10

HOW DID THE WOMEN RESPOND TO SEEING JESUS? WHY DOES JESUS'S RESURRECTION DEMAND A RESPONSE FROM US TOO?

Our lives reflect our response to Jesus—to His crucifixion, to His resurrection, to His ascension. The women who saw Jesus risen and alive responded in worship, even positioning themselves in a posture of worship by bowing at and clinging to Jesus's feet. Jesus is who He claimed to be; what He said would happen did happen. He is absolutely Lord and King. Jesus is trustworthy—He is truth—and we must respond to Him (John 14:6). **Our lives—even the unseen parts, like our thoughts and motives—are a response to the reality of the gospel; our lives reflect whether or not we believe the gospel is true.** We live either bowed in worship to Jesus, who alone is worthy, or bowed in worship to something or someone else, which is powerless to save us.

WHAT COULD THE WOMEN HAVE FEARED (V. 10)? HOW CAN JESUS'S RESURRECTION HELP US BATTLE OUR FEARS?

Imagine seeing Jesus standing before you after witnessing His crucifixion. Fear is an understandable response, but Jesus told the women not to fear after they'd already bowed in worship—after they knew His identity. **Sometimes, we're fearful even though we know Jesus too.** Maybe they feared people not believing them, even Jesus's followers. Maybe they feared Jewish and Roman leaders. But Jesus had risen; He was standing with them, and He was going ahead of them. **The same is true for us, no matter what we fear: Jesus rose! He is with us! He goes ahead of us!** Because of these truths, everything we fear will come undone one day. We are safe with Jesus.



READ EPHESIANS 2:1-8. HOW ARE WE "DEAD" WITHOUT JESUS? WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT HE "MADE US ALIVE"?

Let's face it: The cross confronts our sin. When we think about Jesus's sacrifice, we remember our debt. We remember that we were dead because of our sin. Maybe remembering our debt is helpful, even when it's painful. Why? We were dead; now, we're alive! Shouldn't our lives reflect this? Now, our language honors the Lord; our love for and willingness to forgive others grows; our priorities shift; our joy grows; our peace lasts. We live with hope. We won't do this perfectly because we're human. But because we are now spiritually alive and walking with God, He keeps renewing us. **If we claim to know Jesus yet live like we are still dead in sin, then we're telling the world that knowing Jesus doesn't really transform us. And this simply isn't true.**

WRAP-UP

 **IN WHAT PARTS OF LIFE DO YOU STRUGGLE TO LIVE LIKE YOU HAVE THE GREATEST HOPE? HOW WOULD IT LOOK TO LIVE THIS WAY WHEN YOU FACE PAIN, SUFFERING, TRIALS, OR TEMPTATION?**

Jesus suffered in agony and died a brutal death. He carried the weight of humanity's sin. But we must lean in to the rest of the narrative: Death was not the end! If Jesus never defeated death, then neither would we; we'd be left hopeless (1 Cor. 15:17-19).

Jesus's resurrection changed everything! Because He rose, believers will rise too. What better hope exists than *this*? No greater fear exists than the fear of death, but because God gave His Son to die on our behalf and raised Him to life, we don't have to fear death! We are secure because of Jesus's atoning sacrifice. We have a "living hope" and an inheritance waiting for us in heaven that never fades or perishes!

This hope and security enable us to rejoice even in suffering because we know sin, pain, and death will end; we are safe forever because of Jesus's sacrifice (1 Pet. 1:3-9).

Living with hope doesn't belittle or diminish our pain; it enables us to give God glory in the middle of it, while we're enduring "for a short time."