

Easter Week: Sacrifice & Salvation

▼ Click on a study title you'd like to see ▼

- 2 Study 1: **THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY**
Leader's Guide — Participant's Guide
- 11 Study 2: **THE LAST SUPPER**
Leader's Guide — Participant's Guide
- 20 Study 3: **THE CRUCIFIXION**
Leader's Guide — Participant's Guide
- 29 Study 4: **THE RESURRECTION**
Leader's Guide — Participant's Guide



The Triumphal Entry

Leader's Guide

Leader's Guide

The Triumphal Entry

Christ entered Jerusalem in honor as a king.

Palm Sunday is, at best, "a day of temporary triumph," says Wallace Viets. At worst, it is an illustration of the "fickle nature of the voice of the people." It's a day that lifts us with shouts of praise, but just a few days later we see denial, betrayal, and unfaithfulness. It all culminates in the glory of the Resurrection. But it began on Palm Sunday, a day of applause.



Scripture: Luke 19:28-44

Based On: The [PreachingToday.com](https://www.preachingtoday.com) sermon "A Day of Applause," by W. Frank Harrington.



The Triumphal Entry

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

The last week of Jesus' life began on Palm Sunday. He entered Jerusalem for the last time in a parade. Up until that moment, he studiously avoided public acclaim and publicity. Now he reached out for it. It was Passover time. The city was jammed with pilgrims from all over the world. He entered Jerusalem in a way that would focus the whole city on his arrival.

The donkey was a noble beast in that culture. Generals and kings rode a horse only when they went to war. When a king or a general came in peace, he rode a donkey. Jesus was not the martial figure that the populace anticipated and wanted, but one who came in peace.

The cheers that greeted him were tremendous. Jesus' followers were caught up in the spirit of things to such a degree that the Pharisees rebuked them and said to Jesus, "You should really get a handle on the extravagant claims your disciples are making."

Ann Weems, in her book *Kneeling in Jerusalem*, captures the spirit of this monumental entrance in a poem entitled "Between Parades":

We're good at planning! Give us a task force and a project and we're off and running! No trouble at all! Going to the village and finding the colt, even negotiating with the owners is right down our alley. And how we love a parade! In a frenzy of celebration we gladly focus on Jesus and generously throw down our coats and palms in his path. And we can shout praise loudly enough to make a Pharisee complain. It's all so good, the parade! It's between parades that we don't do so well. We don't do so well from Sunday to Sunday. For we forget our hosannas between parades. The stones will have to shout because we won't.

In his book *Seven Days that Changed the World* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1962), Wallace Viets calls it a day of temporary triumph. This is an indication of the way in which the day leaves us with a sense of ambivalence. It begins with joy and hosannas; it ends with Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.

Discussion Questions:

[Q] What comes to mind when you think of Palm Sunday?

[Q] What significance do you think that event has for us today? Why?



The Triumphal Entry

Leader's Guide

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Jesus' arrival was greeted with deserved joy.

Read Luke 19:28–44

Jesus had been drawing huge crowds for some time. The people gladly heard him. There is every indication that he was met by a great rush of people wherever he went. His words spoke to the heart and had the ring of truth, as they do today. The authority of his presence was commanding. The things that he did were electrifying. Blind eyes could see again. Lame legs surged with vitality and strength. And those confined to pallets of affliction were up and about. The word that surged through the hearts of everyone who pressed to touch him was *hope!* In his presence people could dream impossible dreams, and they came true.

Parents brought their children for him to bless. Relatives brought their loved ones, a veritable caravan of the needy, so that he might touch them and heal them. Depressed spirits were lifted and made whole. Hopeless hearts dared to hope again. Make no mistake about it, he was greeted with joy as he entered the city—as he should have been.

[Q] What actions in this passage show that the people were honoring Jesus?

Leader's Note: *The owners of the colt freely let them take it for Jesus. The people threw their cloaks down in his honor. They joyfully praised God.*

[Q] According to verse 37, why did they praise him?

Leader's Note: *Because of the miracles he had performed.*

[Q] Might this explain why their loyalty waned as the week went on?

Leader's Note: *They wanted a king who would heal them, provide for them, and liberate them. In other words, they were in it for themselves, not for Christ's honor and worth.*

[Q] What is the right reason to honor Jesus?

Leader's Note: *Because he is God and deserves our allegiance and loyalty.*

Teaching Point Two: Jesus' arrival preceded betrayal.

The triumphal entry on Palm Sunday was to mark the end of spontaneous public approval for Jesus of Nazareth. As the week unfolded, it was downhill all the way to Good Friday. A deadly coalition of temple hierarchy, Roman government, and betrayal within the band of disciples would lead to his death. The challenge that Jesus issued during the week would prompt many to abandon his cause and to forsake him.



The Triumphal Entry

Leader's Guide

When Jesus noticed that some were slipping away, he asked his disciples, “Will you also go away?” They assured him through their spokesman Peter that though all should abandon him, they would not go away. But now they sensed danger in the air. The inner circle—Peter, James, and John—promised that they would watch with him for one hour, but they didn’t keep their promise. While he sweated blood in Gethsemane, they took naps. They made all kinds of promises to Jesus by night, but by day they made tracks.

And here we are, 20 centuries later, still feeling the ambivalence of Palm Sunday. An electrifying moment of public entry and confrontation, and a powerful statement about what he stood for—a kingdom of the heart where men and women would be changed forever. Palm Sunday was the end, though, of any public affirmation for his ministry.

When he was on the way to Calvary, carrying the burden of his cross, back lacerated from scourging, a crown of thorns on his brow, Jesus stumbled. He needed someone to bear the weight of that cross. Surely one of his disciples would leap from the crowd and volunteer. But no, a stranger, Simon of Cyrene, had to be “volunteered” by the command of a Roman soldier. Where were those enthusiastic disciples who had proclaimed, “God has given us a King. Long live the King! Let all heaven rejoice!”

The voice of the people cannot be relied upon; it’s a fickle voice. Today’s hero is tomorrow’s goat. Crowds have a short memory. They usually ask the question, “What have you done for me today?” They greet heroes with joy, but the applause always ends.

[Q] In what way are followers of Christ today often like the crowds in Luke 19?

[Q] Jesus embraced the crowd’s praise. Why do you think he did?

[Q] Why do you think Jesus said the rocks would cry out if the people went silent (Luke 19:40)?

[Q] Read Zechariah 9:9 and Genesis 49:10–11a. What did Jesus hope people would understand from the way he entered Jerusalem?

Optional Activity:

Purpose: *To recognize what our worship is based on.*

Activity: *Discuss as a group whether the following people are worshiping Christ for the right or wrong reasons. (Leader’s Note: Each of these could be supported as a good reason to praise God, but a discussion may bring out the flimsiness of some of the reasons. How will we act and feel when things get tough, if we only worship when things go well?)*

The Triumphal Entry

Leader's Guide

- *Marion feels especially close to Christ today because she found a good parking spot when she went shopping.*
- *Wayne was finally able to praise God, even though he was not cured of cancer.*
- *Carolyn thanked God that her child was not hurt in an accident.*
- *James praised God that his team won the football game.*

Teaching Point Three: Jesus' arrival was accompanied by tears.

Jesus wept because he knew the condition of the people and their need. He had come to change their hearts, not their government. Ann Weems captures the moment, "There is but one face / whose holy eyes won't turn away / but focus on us and weep!"

There are two instances in the New Testament when Jesus wept. The first was when he heard of the death of his friend Lazarus. He wept, but he provided new life for Lazarus. The second was when he wept over Jerusalem because he saw it as a place of lost opportunity. He explained his mission over and over, but they never got the message. Even his close circle of followers was a hopeless muddle, each with his own agenda and ambitions. As they jockeyed for power, one would deny him, another would betray him, and all but one would flee the city when the chips were down. It was enough to make anybody weep!

His disciples knew there was danger in Jerusalem. They didn't want him to go. But he persisted. Why? Perhaps a story from the book *Best Sermons* will help:

Her name was April. She had been placed in one foster home after another. She seemed more and more to retreat into a world of fantasy and dreams. Those who studied her feared that she was retarded. Actually, her withdrawal was simply a coping mechanism that helped her cope with so many temporary things in her life.

She finally landed in a home run by an elderly couple who had 15 children committed to their care, because they were paid to do it. They were hard and demanding and sometimes cruel in their dealings with the children. April found joy, and I suspect sanity, in a world of fantasy where she hummed little tunes and sang songs that she made up.

She pretended to write them down and put them in an envelope and mail them to someone. The couple who kept her was bothered by this writing and mailing things, because they were afraid a letter that was critical of them would fall into the hands of the authorities. The children would be removed, and hence the loss of revenue. So they forbade her to write any more notes or to sing any songs.

But it wasn't long before April was writing down her songs again. She was scribbling a note one day, and the woman saw that when she finished, she put it in an envelope and walked out into the yard, not toward the post office, but toward a tree. She climbed

The Triumphal Entry

Leader's Guide

the tree, and between two limbs she placed her song. The foster mother immediately summoned her husband, who secured a ladder, and they got the note out of the fork of the tree. He handed it to his wife, and she read this: "Whoever finds this note—I love you."

That's why Jesus persisted in going to Jerusalem. He went with a powerful, renewing, transforming message: "Whoever reaches out to me—I love you!" He wept because he knew they would not respond. It would be rejection, an opportunity missed.

We are still missing that opportunity.

[Q] What was Jesus referring to in verses 43 and 44?

Leader's Note: *The destruction of Jerusalem, which would occur a few decades after his death.*

[Q] Why did Jesus say that if they'd only known, this day would give them peace (v. 42)?

Leader's Note: *Jesus was referring to peace with God, but he seems to indicate that the destruction of Jerusalem may not have had to happen if they had recognized who he was (v. 44).*

[Q] Knowing this, give all the reasons Jesus had to weep over Jerusalem.

[Q] Name the reasons you have to weep over your city.

[Q] How can you turn that sorrow into action?

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Jesus' arrival demands our response. It brings pleasure to the heart of God when we give to him. The story of Eric Liddell was immortalized for many in the movie *Chariots of Fire*. He had felt the call of God to go to China as a missionary with his sister.

One of the most gripping scenes in the movie was when he told his sister that he was going to delay going to the mission field so that he could continue training for the Olympics. She was crestfallen. He sought to help her understand by saying, "Jenny, Jenny. I know God created me for his service, but he also made me fast! When I run, I feel God's pleasure!"

The Triumphal Entry

Leader's Guide

When we give to him the gifts of heart and hand, God feels pleasure, and so do we. We know the rest of Eric Liddell's story. He participated in the Olympics, he refused to run on a Sunday, and his subsequent winning of a gold medal turned out to be a witness for Christ to the whole world.

The Lord has need of you. Have you answered his call of love? You can begin by saying, "I give him my heart." That's why he came.

Action Point: How do you need to respond to Jesus' arrival? Do you need to surrender every area of your life? Do you need to show the kind of love to others that Jesus came to show? Consider the gifts of hand and heart that you've been given. What can you give to the one who has given us everything, including life?

—Study by W. Frank Harrington, with JoHannah Reardon



The Triumphal Entry

Participant's Guide

Participant's Guide

The Triumphal Entry

Christ entered Jerusalem in honor as a king.

Palm Sunday is, at best, "a day of temporary triumph," says Wallace Viets. At worst, it is an illustration of the "fickle nature of the voice of the people." It's a day that lifts us with shouts of praise, but just a few days later we see denial, betrayal, and unfaithfulness. It all culminates in the glory of the Resurrection. But it began on Palm Sunday, a day of applause.



Scripture: Luke 19:28-44

Based On: The [PreachingToday.com](https://www.preachingtoday.com) sermon "A Day of Applause," by W. Frank Harrington.



The Triumphal Entry

Participant's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

The last week of Jesus' life began on Palm Sunday. He entered Jerusalem for the last time in a parade. He had studiously, up until that moment, avoided public acclaim and publicity. Now, he reached out for it. It was Passover time. The city was jammed with pilgrims from all over the world. He entered Jerusalem in a way that would focus the whole city on his arrival.

Wallace Viets calls it a day of temporary triumph. This is an indication of the way in which the day leaves us with a sense of ambivalence. It begins with joy and hosannas. It ends with Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Jesus' arrival was greeted with deserved joy.

Teaching Point Two: Jesus' arrival preceded betrayal.

Teaching Point Three: Jesus' arrival was accompanied by tears.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Jesus' arrival demands our response. It brings pleasure to the heart of God when we give to him. The Lord has need of you. Have you answered his call of late? You can begin by saying, "I give him my heart." That's why he came.

—Study by W. Frank Harrington, with JoHannah Reardon



The Last Supper

Leader's Guide

Leader's Guide

The Last Supper

Communion searches and strengthens our hearts.

The Last Supper instituted the practice of Communion, which most of us celebrate on a regular basis in our churches. This study looks at how this practice initiates us into an understanding of God's redemption and release. It also exposes our hearts and feeds our deepest hunger.



Scripture: Matthew 26:17-30

Based On: The [PreachingToday.com](https://www.preachingtoday.com) sermon "The Dinner Guests of God," by Lee Eclov.



The Last Supper

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.

Mary Poplin, professor of education and Dean of the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University, attended a Methodist church as a child, but began searching other spiritual traditions, including Buddhism, Transcendental Meditation, even telepathic attempts to bend spoons.

Then she began teaching at Claremont, where a Christian friend encouraged her spiritual journey. Eventually, in 1993, she became a Christian. In her own words, this was the last step:

In January, my mother wanted to go to North Carolina to where she had grown up. We went to this little Methodist church, not because she was religious; she just wanted to see her friends.

When we got there, I was really moved to just go up to the altar and give my life to the Lord. It wasn't even an altar call. It was a communion call. The guy said, you don't have to be a member of any church to take communion. You just have to believe that Jesus Christ lived, that he died for your sins, and you have to want him in your life. And when he said that, I was so powerfully moved that I actually thought, even if a tornado rips through this building, I'm going to get that communion.

I took the communion, and I didn't even listen to the guy. I knelt down and said, "Please come and get me. Please come and get me. Please come and get me." And when I took the communion and I said that, I felt free. I felt like tons of things had been lifted off of me.

Communion—the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist—is a powerful experience. It is a meal that touches the soul. In Matthew 26, we look at the story that gives rise to our observance of the Lord's Supper. This passage helps us see what makes Communion such a uniquely significant meal.

Discussion Questions:

[Q] What does Communion mean to you? Why do you take it?



The Last Supper

Leader's Guide

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: We're invited to a meal made from God's ancient recipes of redemption and release.

Read Matthew 26:17–30.

Jesus built Communion on the Passover (v. 17–19). For 1,500 years, the Passover had been teaching God's people the flavors of man's great need and God's great salvation. This sacred observance looks back to God's deliverance of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt and the plague of death on all the firstborn in that land. It was a meal of strange recipes and flavors—salt water to remind people of the tears of slavery; bitter herbs, like horseradish, so people would remember the sour flavor of bondage; a fruit paste with cinnamon sticks to remind people of making bricks of clay and straw; a meal of lamb, commemorating how a lamb was killed for every household and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts, signaling the angel of death to pass over; flat bread, made without yeast, to remind God's people that they are to be both holy (no yeast—like sin puffing up their hearts) and ready to travel (such bread could be made quickly, and would travel well and wouldn't spoil); and then there were four cups of wine taken throughout the meal.

This custom was drawn from four promises made by God to Israel in Exodus 6:6–7: “I will bring you out ... I will free you from being slaves ... I will redeem you ... I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.”

The Passover was precious to Jesus because it gave his disciples a taste of the ways of God. It reminded people that sin is a life of bondage like Egypt had been, and that sin's slavery is like making endless bricks from clay. It reminded them that death will pass over every house and our only protection lies not in our heritage or might, but in the blood of a sacrificial lamb. It reminded them that God is a redeeming God, buying people out of slavery; and that he is a liberating God, sending them out victorious and safe toward a land flowing with milk-and-honey promises.

These truths about life and God actually acquired a taste in Israel, where the people learned their theology at a table. And Jesus now wanted to teach his disciples that the Passover was the appetizer for the feast of salvation he would bring.

To this day, Communion is more precious to us when we realize that we taste the ancient recipes of God's redemption and freedom. Jesus brought his disciples to the Passover meal on the eve of his death so that their taste for salvation would be piqued.

[Q] How did Passover prepare Israel's heart for Jesus' coming?



The Last Supper

Leader's Guide

[Q] In what ways is Communion like Passover?

Leader's Note: Besides the above-mentioned things, both recognize our utter dependence on God for deliverance.

[Q] What is the significance of the body and the blood in Communion? Why do you think Jesus chose to focus on those two things in his sacrifice?

[Q] What goes through your mind when you take Communion?

Teaching Point Two: We're invited to a meal that exposes our hearts.

In verse 31, Jesus told his disciples, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'"

What a strange feast; it drove one guest away, unsettled all the others, and left the host with a broken heart. Communion is not a safe meal. What happened on that solemn night often happens still when this meal is eaten.

At this meal, the pretender cannot hide from the Lord's judgment. Jesus saw in Judas's heart what no one else could see. He saw the heart of a betrayer and a liar.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:27–32. Paul issued the solemn warning that this is not a meal to be trifled with, to be taken in an unworthy manner, because it can literally kill you. That doesn't mean that sinners cannot eat this meal—for if so it would be an empty table indeed! But it does mean that betrayers dare not dine here, that fakes and frauds eating this food eat poison.

At this meal, every disciple must invite the Lord's examination. The stunning news that a betrayer was among them grieved the disciples greatly, but it also prompted them all to ask, "Surely not I, Lord?" or as the NLT puts it, "I'm not the one, am I, Lord?" It was a question to which they each expected Jesus to say, "No, of course not." But apparently he never replied.

And the fact was, while only one would betray Jesus, they all would forsake him. John tells us that these disciples moved quickly from their shocked question, "Surely not I, Lord?" to an argument about which of them was the greatest. There is a sense in which this meal is intended to bring out the worst in us—not to provoke bad behavior, but to reveal the worst about our fickle hearts. Nancy Mairs wrote, "I don't partake because I'm a good Catholic, holy and pious and sleek. I partake because I'm a bad Catholic, riddled by doubt and anxiety and anger; fainting from severe hypoglycemia of the soul."

Jesus' own profound suffering began at this table among friends. This meal was terribly hard on Jesus. There are a couple of things in these verses we might miss:

The Last Supper

Leader's Guide

First, in verse 23, Jesus said, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.” The point is that they had all dipped their bread in that bowl. Jesus was saying, “My betrayer is one of my most intimate friends.”

The other thing lost on us is that Jesus was the host of this meal, and an absolute essential of that culture was that no one would speak ill against the host—let alone betray him!

Do not forget that Jesus loved Judas. It was grief enough to be forsaken by those he loved most, but to be betrayed by a dear friend, and to know that this betrayal condemned that friend to fierce and eternal judgment—that surely hurt Christ beyond comprehension.

Jesus didn't have to eat that meal with guests who would betray or forsake him. It is a meal, to be sure, that exposes each heart at the table; but most precious, it exposes the heart of Christ, who found fellowship with the likes of us.

[Q] According to 1 Corinthians 11:27–32, what were the Corinthians doing wrong as they took the Lord's Supper?

[Q] What are some other ways we could take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner?

[Q] What is the reason for Communion, according to verse 26?

- Why is it important to do this?
- What would our sin be in taking Communion in an unworthy manner (v. 27)?
- How do we bring judgment on ourselves (v. 29)?

Optional Activity:

Purpose: *To help us to learn how to examine our hearts before taking the Lord's Supper.*

Activity: *Using a whiteboard or poster board, ask the group to come up with a list of questions we could ask ourselves to examine our hearts before we take Communion.*

Teaching Point Three: We're invited to a meal that feeds our deepest hunger.

Look again at Matthew 26:26–29.

This meal feeds our deepest hunger, first because we yearn for food that will sustain us through all of life. Jesus' broken body is food for our journey. There is a reason Jesus chose bread as the symbol of his body.



The Last Supper

Leader's Guide

Bread made without yeast is a biblical symbol of holiness, yeast being an image of all that puffs up and ultimately spoils. Jesus is, for us, like dining on holiness. He is a food for our souls that never spoils, that only strengthens us, that nourishes righteousness and grace deep within us.

God required the Israelites to make unleavened bread so that they would have food for their journey out of bondage to freedom. Here was bread that would last and not spoil, bread that was perfect for pilgrims, a precursor of manna. Jesus is that for us—food for our journey to the land of God's promises, food for the wilderness we must all pass through.

Because we hunger for God, the blood Jesus poured out for forgiveness seals our covenant with him, as it says in verses 27–28: “Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’”

Here, Jesus took his disciples back to their memory of Exodus 24:6–8, when Moses secured Israel's commitment to God's covenant. Read this passage.

Once again, blood would be shed and a covenant established between God and people, but this covenant is written on hearts and purchased with the blood of God's Son. This cup was the third of the four Passover cups, the cup of redemption, celebrating God's promise, “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.” Who would have guessed that God's mighty act of judgment would be pronounced against his own Son, or that this redemption would purchase people for God from every tribe and language, people and nation?

Because we hunger for hope, this meal carries the promise of eternity with Christ. Many believe that Jesus had the fourth cup in mind when he spoke in verse 29: “I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom.” The fourth cup, you'll remember, marked God's promise, “I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.” Down through the centuries, until this day, the Passover liturgy, the *Haggadah*, repeats words like these: “This year we eat it in the land of bondage; next year in the land of promise.” In our one Communion cup are contained both the promise of redemption and the promise of reunion. And it is that promise that sustains us, that feeds our soul-deep hunger for hope.

- [Q] How does Communion feed the deepest hunger in your soul?
- [Q] How might understanding Passover better make the Last Supper more meaningful?
- [Q] What kind of meaning would taking Communion have had for the disciples after Jesus' death and resurrection? How might reflecting on that increase our own appreciation of Communion?
- [Q] Is there any way we could put too much emphasis on Communion? If so, how?

The Last Supper

Leader's Guide

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Slowly, God is gathering his family home. Steve Brown once said, “The world drinks to forget; the Christian drinks to remember.” We drink to remember both our redemption and our promised reunion.

We come to this simple meal again and again because it is a meal that feeds our deepest hungers—strength for life’s journey, a relationship with God, and hope for eternity.

Communion is rich with the ancient recipes of God-given grace and freedom. It is a meal that lays bare the secrets of the heart. And it is a meal that in some mysterious way beyond our understanding brings health to our souls.

Action Point: If you did the optional activity, record those questions for your private reflection the next time you take Communion. If you did not do it, make a list when you get home that will help you examine your heart before taking the Lord’s Supper.

—Study by Lee Eclov, with JoHannah Reardon



The Last Supper

Participant's Guide

Participant's Guide

The Last Supper

Communion searches and strengthens our hearts.

The Last Supper instituted the practice of Communion, which most of us celebrate on a regular basis in our churches. This study looks at how this practice initiates us into an understanding of God's redemption and release. It also exposes our hearts and feeds our deepest hunger.



Scripture: [Matthew 26:17-30](#)

Based On: The [PreachingToday.com](#) sermon "The Dinner Guests of God," by Lee Eclov.



The Last Supper

Participant's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Communion—the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist—is a powerful experience. It is a meal that touches the soul. In Matthew 26, we look at the story that gives rise to our observance of the Lord's Supper. This passage helps us see what makes Communion such a uniquely significant meal.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: We're invited to a meal made from God's ancient recipes of redemption and release.

Teaching Point Two: We're invited to a meal that exposes our hearts.

Three: We're invited to a meal that feeds our deepest hunger.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Slowly, God is gathering his family home. Steve Brown once said, "The world drinks to forget; the Christian drinks to remember." We drink to remember both our redemption and our promised reunion.

We come to this simple meal again and again because it is a meal that feeds our deepest hungers—strength for life's journey, a relationship with God, and hope for eternity.

Communion is rich with the ancient recipes of God-given grace and freedom. It is a meal that lays bare the secrets of the heart. And it is a meal that in some mysterious way beyond our understanding brings health to our souls.

—Study by Lee Eclov, with JoHannah Reardon



The Crucifixion

Leader's Guide

Leader's Guide

The Crucifixion

Through the rejection of the Cross, Jesus is exalted as king.

The Cross is central to our faith. What happened on Good Friday defines Jesus' life and ministry. This study seeks to emphasize the value of the Cross to us by pointing out the new life it provides.



Scripture: [Matthew 27:27-54](#)

Based On: The [PreachingToday.com](#) sermon "The Agony of Victory," by Lee Eclov.



The Crucifixion

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: *At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.*

Some years ago, a 14-foot bronze crucifix was stolen from Calvary Cemetery in Little Rock, Arkansas. It had stood at the entrance to that cemetery for more than 50 years. The cross was put there in 1930 by a Catholic bishop and had been valued at the time at \$10,000. The thieves apparently cut it off at its base and hauled it off in a pick-up. Police speculate that they cut it into small pieces and sold it for scrap.

They figured that the 900-pound cross probably brought about \$450. The thieves obviously didn't realize the value of that cross.

That is the problem, of course—understanding the value of the Cross. As Matthew relates the story of Jesus' crucifixion, the theme that runs through all the details is rejection. Not only didn't people see the value of Jesus, they also didn't understand the value of his death. May we not be so blind!

Discussion Questions:

- [Q] What do you see as the purpose of the Crucifixion?
- [Q] What difference has it made in your life? Why?

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Jesus was utterly rejected as the Messiah king.

Read Matthew 27:27–54.

As we come to this text, Jesus has already felt the heavy blows of rejection—Judas's betrayal, Peter's denial, the disciples' abandonment, the courts that found him guilty of blasphemy, and the cries of the crowd for his crucifixion. Now the descent continues.

The Roman soldiers dramatized mankind's rejection of Jesus as king (v. 27–31). They played a sadistic game with Jesus, outfitting him like a king but with a cast-off robe, a crown of thorns, a reed scepter, and a mocking tribute: "Hail, king of the Jews." It would have been horrible for anyone, but this is Jesus, whose rightful throne is encircled by "a rainbow, resembling an

The Crucifixion

Leader's Guide

emerald,” whose rightful attendants are 24 elders also seated on thrones, thousands upon thousands of angels, and beings too extraordinary for human description; whose rightful worship resounds with “Holy, Holy, Holy” and “You are worthy ... to receive glory and honor and power.” This is the one whom those guards parodied and whom this world rejected.

Everything that surrounded the crucifixion shouts rejection (v. 32–38), a tightly packed summary according to the Old Testament script:

- * He was taken outside the holy city—rejected by his people, like the sin offerings in Deuteronomy.
- * He was offered wine mixed with gall, which tasted like bile. Some think this was a merciful narcotic, but more likely it was another mocking rejection, as predicted in Psalm 69:21: “They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.”
- * He was crucified on a man-made tree, the sign of God’s curse (Deuteronomy 21:23: “Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse”).
- * His clothes were confiscated, leaving him nothing, fulfilling the prediction of Psalm 22:18, a psalm of the Messiah’s rejection: “They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.”
- * They ironically placed over his head the charge, “This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.”
- * They crucified him between two terrorists or robbers, as predicted in Isaiah 53:12: “[He] was numbered with the transgressors.”

Rejection was written on every single act that surrounded Jesus’ death, yet apparently no one saw that this was the Suffering Servant of Israel prophesied by Isaiah.

Added to these deeds of rejection was the crowd’s ridicule in verses 39–44. In essence, these taunts said:

You can’t build a new temple; why, you can’t even save yourself.

You aren’t the King of Israel; why, you can’t even come off this Roman cross.

You aren’t the Son of God, because God won’t save you. God doesn’t want you!

To think such things were said to the one who is one with the Father—to the one who is the Son of God.

The Crucifixion

Leader's Guide

Then came the hammer blow: Jesus was forsaken by God the Father (v. 45–49). The darkness from noon till three signaled that God's own court was in session. Dark drapes were pulled around the proceedings. It was both too holy and too terrible for our eyes. The darkness was a familiar portent of God's judgment. Listen to the ominous prediction of Amos 8:9–10: "In that day," declares the Sovereign LORD, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day."

William Hendriksen wrote:

The darkness meant judgment, the judgment of God upon our sins, his wrath as it were burning itself out in the very heart of Jesus, so that he, as our Substitute, suffered most intense agony, indescribable woe, terrible isolation or forsakenness. Hell came to Calvary that day, and the Savior descended into it and bore its horrors in our stead.

We call it the cry of desolation—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"—and it climaxes the abandonment of Jesus. C. S. Lewis wrote, "To God, God's last words are 'Why hast thou forsaken me?'" God the Father forsook God the Son because the Judge would not look upon the sin-bearer. Jesus in those moments was no longer spotless; he was thoroughly stained with our sin. He was no longer faultless; he was guilty through and through with our sin. God could not help him; God could not even face him.

When all this rejection came to the crushing climax of the Father's own rejection—when Jesus had suffered from sin and for sin—when it was all accomplished, verse 50 says, "He gave up his spirit."

D. A. Carson writes, "It was at this moment, when he was experiencing the abyss of his alienation from the Father and was being cruelly mocked by those he came to serve, that he chose to yield up his life a 'ransom for many.'"

Jesus endured all this rejection for sinners. He died from sin and for sin. Gale Webbe wrote, "The only ultimate way to conquer evil is to let it be smothered within a willing, living, human being. When it is absorbed there, like blood in a sponge or a spear thrown into one's heart, it loses its power and goes no further."

The charge of the mockers hangs in the air: "He saved others," they said, "But he can't save himself."

Robert Coleman put it well: "Of course, he could not save himself. He had not come to save himself. He had come to save the world."



The Crucifixion

Leader's Guide

There is a picture of this in Mark Twain's story *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Mark Twain tells the adventures of a very ordinary man from the 19th century who is transported back to the medieval world of King Arthur. At one point he convinces King Arthur to dress like a peasant and take a journey through his kingdom. The results are generally laughable as the king, completely oblivious to life in the trenches, tries to carry on with all the pomp of the court while those around him simply think he is crazy. But there is a wonderful paragraph describing a moment when this king in disguise reveals the true royalty of his heart. He and his companion come upon a beggar's home, and find it silent as death because smallpox is claiming the beggar's daughter. The king disappears up a ladder looking for the girl.

There was a slight noise from the direction of the dim corner where the ladder was. It was the king descending. I could see that he was bearing something in one arm, and assisting himself with the other. He came forward into the light; upon his breast lay a slender girl of fifteen. She was but half conscious; she was dying of smallpox.

Here was heroism at its last and loftiest possibility, its utmost summit; this was challenging death in the open field unarmed, with all the odds against the challenger, nor reward set upon the contest, and no admiring world in silks and cloth-of-gold to gaze and applaud; and yet the king's bearing was as serenely brave as it had always been in those cheaper contests where knight meets knight in equal fight and clothed in protecting steel. He was great now; sublimely great. The rude statues of his ancestors in his palace should have an addition—I would see to that; and it would not be a mailed king killing a giant or a dragon, like the rest. It would be a king in commoner's garb bearing death in his arms.

There is Jesus on the cross!

[Q] Imagine that you were one of Jesus' followers that day. Why do you think they failed to see him as the suffering servant prophesied in Isaiah 53?

[Q] In what way is an act of sacrifice more powerful than an act of force?

[Q] Why was Jesus so willing to give up his life when everyone, including God the Father, had forsaken him?

[Q] How can you show your gratitude toward him for this gift to you?

Optional Activity:

Purpose: *To connect Old Testament prophecies with the events of the Cross.*

Activity: *On a poster board or whiteboard, write the following Scripture references and have someone in the group read them: Psalm 69:21; Deuteronomy 21:23; Psalm 22:18; Isaiah 53:9; Amos 8:9; Psalm 22:1. When finished, find the corresponding verses in the Matthew 27 passage and write them down next to each of these Old Testament prophecies.*



The Crucifixion

Leader's Guide

Teaching Point Two: When Jesus died, rejected as king, he inaugurated a new kingdom of life.

In verses 51–54 Matthew records some amazing events. Each was a sign of the life that Jesus had secured.

In verse 51, the torn veil in the temple signaled that forever after, forgiven sinners could go boldly to God without fear. The temple would continue to be in use for nearly another 40 years, but in that moment it was essentially obsolete. All it represented had been torn down, just as Jesus had promised. No more sacrifices were needed. The priests all became unnecessary; they were just going through the motions. The great festivals were fulfilled.

By being rejected as Messiah-King, Jesus opened the way to God and closed the door forever on the old ways. Did you pray this week? You were heard because the veil was torn when Jesus died. Did you find forgiveness for your sins? You were forgiven because the veil is torn. Did you enjoy the Lord's company, his grace and truth? It was so because the veil is torn. Did you think of your heavenly home? It will be yours because the veil is torn!

Look again at verses 51–53. Isn't that a strange story! The best scholars think our English translation needs to be repunctuated here, to indicate that while there was an earthquake when Jesus died, the bodies of the holy people were not resurrected until after Jesus' own resurrection. But the amazing point here is this rash of resurrections!

Here is the thing: the seemingly powerless Savior was mighty enough in his death to break open the dungeons of the dead. Look closely at these strange holy people. Just like us, they had trusted God for this moment, never imagining quite how extraordinary it would be. This hints at our own future—saints walking out of death, into the Holy City, testimonies of the power of Christ's life to all we meet in that eternal home.

Look again at verse 54. This centurion and soldiers are the same “governor's soldiers” who so abused Jesus, who mocked him as king and crucified him as a criminal.

Goethe said, “There the cross stands, thickly wreathed in roses. Who put the roses on the cross?” That cross is the cross of life!

[Q] What most strikes you about this passage?

[Q] What do you think was the significance of all those resurrections?

[Q] Why was the testimony of the centurion and soldiers so powerful?

[Q] Although the cross was an instrument of death, what made it into an instrument of life for us?



The Crucifixion

Leader's Guide

[Q] Recount the reasons that the torn veil was so significant.

Leader's Note: Sinners could go boldly to God without fear. No more sacrifices were needed. The priests became unnecessary. The great festivals were fulfilled.

- How might this change your appreciation for approaching God now and in the future?

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

The blasphemed Son of God is vindicated by the praise of the very sinners who killed him. This first expression of budding faith is not made at the empty tomb, but at the feet of the dead Savior, as the darkness of judgment fled away and the earth convulsed beneath their feet. There were, perhaps, two converts on that afternoon—the one crucified terrorist and the crucifying centurion. And they were the first of an innumerable host of unlikely descendants born to Jesus in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:10: “Though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days.”

Max Lucado writes, “Had the centurion not said it, the rocks would have—as would have the angels, the stars, even the demons. But he did say it. It fell to a nameless foreigner to state what they all knew. ‘Surely this man was the Son of God.’” So let us together echo that great triumphant affirmation from the foot of the cross: Surely he was the Son of God!

Action Point: How do you need to respond to Jesus' death on the cross for you? Do you need to accept his forgiveness and proclaim him Lord of your life? Do you need to commit your life to his service as a result of his sacrifice for you? If you have previously made that commitment, evaluate the current direction of your life. Does it reflect gratitude for Jesus' sacrifice and discipleship in his ways? Take some moments for quiet reflection. If comfortable, ask the group to pray for you in the area you know he is nudging you.

—Study by Lee Eclov, with JoHannah Reardon



The Crucifixion

Participant's Guide

Participant's Guide

The Crucifixion

Through the rejection of the Cross, Jesus is exalted as king.

The Cross is central to our faith. What happened on Good Friday defines Jesus' life and ministry. This study seeks to emphasize the value of the Cross to us by pointing out the new life it provides.



Scripture: [Matthew 27:27-54](#)

Based On: The [PreachingToday.com](#) sermon "The Agony of Victory," by Lee Eclov.



The Crucifixion

Participant's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

We have a problem understanding the value of the Cross. As Matthew relates the story of Jesus' crucifixion, the theme that runs through all the details is rejection. Not only didn't people see the value of Jesus, they also didn't understand the value of his death. May we not be so blind!

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Jesus was utterly rejected as the Messiah king.

Teaching Point Two: When Jesus died, rejected as king, he inaugurated a new kingdom of life.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Max Lucado writes, "Had the centurion not said it, the rocks would have—as would have the angels, the stars, even the demons. But he did say it. It fell to a nameless foreigner to state what they all knew. 'Surely this man was the Son of God.'" So let us together echo that great triumphant affirmation from the foot of the cross: Surely he was the Son of God!

—*Study by Lee Eclov, with JoHannah Reardon*



The Resurrection

Leader's Guide

Leader's Guide

The Resurrection

The evidence is overwhelming that Jesus rose from the dead.

What does Jesus' resurrection mean? It means that Jesus is who he claimed to be, that he has the power he claimed to have, and that we have hope for this life and the one to come. This study will look at the evidence that Jesus is truly alive today by looking at the events of 2,000 years ago.



Scripture: [Matthew 27:62–28:15](#)

Based On: The [PreachingToday.com](#) sermon "The Truth About the Resurrection," by Lee Strobel.



The Resurrection

Leader's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

Note to leader: *At the beginning of the class, provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study.*

Who would you guess is the most successful trial attorney in the entire world? *The Guinness Book of World Records* says, "Most successful attorney: Sir Lionel Luckhoo, who succeeded in getting his 245th consecutive murder acquittal by January 1, 1985."

This is an absolutely astonishing feat that nobody else in the world has ever come close to replicating. More than 200 consecutive murder trials either won before a jury or won on appeal. He's probably a very bright person with tremendous analytical skills. He certainly must be an expert on what constitutes reliable, admissible, and persuasive evidence.

Wouldn't it be interesting to get an opinion on the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus from a monumental legal expert like Sir Lionel Luckhoo? During his own spiritual journey, Luckhoo took his expertise in law and went through the question of whether the resurrection of Jesus Christ stands up to the test of legal evidence. He ultimately concluded: "I say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt."

Our everyday experience tells us that dead people do not come back to life. Yet here we have the most successful attorney on the planet applying the legal tests of evidence to the historical accounts of Jesus Christ's resurrection, and concluding with absolute confidence that his resurrection is a reality. Having looked at the evidence, he then did the most logical thing in the world: he gave his life to Jesus Christ.

Like Sir Lionel Luckhoo, we should examine the evidence for ourselves. In 1 Corinthians 15:17 the apostle Paul wrote, "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." The resurrection of Jesus is the linchpin of Christianity. It is the ultimate authentication of Jesus Christ's claim that he is the unique Son of God.

Discussion Questions:

- [Q] What makes you believe that Jesus' resurrection actually did occur?
- [Q] What doubts, if any, do you have about the Resurrection?
- [Q] Why is belief in the Resurrection central to the Christian faith?



The Resurrection

Leader's Guide

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Evidence shows the Resurrection is not a created myth.

The accounts of Jesus Christ began very early, before mythology could contaminate the accounts. For instance, we have a creed, recited by the church as early as 24 to 36 months after the death of Jesus, that said, "Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried. And he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." The creed goes on to specifically mention eyewitnesses that Jesus appeared to. The fact that these accounts of Jesus' resurrection go back so early completely contradicts the assertion that the resurrection was a product of mythology that developed during the decades following Jesus' life.

Studies into the rate at which legend accrued in the ancient world tell us it takes a minimum of two generations for mythology to corrupt a solid core of historical fact. There was nowhere near that amount of time in the case of Jesus Christ. In fact, when the apostle Paul mentioned that Jesus appeared to 500 people at one time, he said many of the 500 were still alive. In effect, Paul was saying, "If you don't believe me, go ask the witnesses. They're still around." The proclamation that Jesus Christ is the resurrected Son of God began virtually immediately after his death. It was not a product of mythology.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1–8.

- [Q] According to this passage, what were the essential messages of the gospel?
- [Q] Why do you think Paul listed so many people who had seen Jesus after his resurrection?
- [Q] Why would some think Jesus' resurrection was a created myth?
- [Q] When did Jesus appear to Paul (v. 8)?

Leader's Note: See Acts 9.

- [Q] What kind of difference would that appearance have made to his ministry?
- [Q] Why must we be convinced of Jesus' resurrection in order to properly worship him?

Teaching Point Two: Evidence proves the tomb was empty.

In 1990, archaeologists in Jerusalem uncovered the burial place of Caiaphas, Jesus' chief accuser. Nobody has ever uncovered the body of Jesus Christ. History tells us Jesus' body was laid to rest in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, and the tomb was sealed. An extremely heavy boulder was rolled in front of it, and it was guarded by elite Roman guards. Yet it was discovered empty on Easter morning—quite significantly—by some women.

The Resurrection

Leader's Guide

The fact that the Bible says women discovered the tomb empty lends even more credibility to these accounts, because women had low status in Jewish society at that time. If the disciples had been fabricating this story, surely they would have claimed it was men who discovered the tomb empty, because their testimony would have been more credible in that culture. This is one more indication the writers were committed to recording exactly what took place, even though that bit of historical truth didn't help their case.

More importantly, however, even Jesus' opponents admitted the tomb was empty. They bribed the guards of the tomb to say that the disciples stole the body while they were asleep. That's ridiculous because the disciples didn't have the opportunity. Besides, if the guards were sleeping, how did they know it was the disciples who stole the body?

The point is, when the disciples declared the tomb was empty, Jesus' opponents didn't respond by saying, "You're wrong. He's in the tomb." Nor did they respond, "You just have the wrong tomb. The body is over here." Instead, they admitted the tomb was empty on Easter.

How did the tomb become empty? Certainly the Roman and Jewish authorities wouldn't have taken the body. They wanted Jesus dead. The Jews or Romans would have loved to produce the dead body of Jesus Christ and kill the doubt right there. But they didn't because they couldn't.

Would the disciples remove the body, though they had nothing to gain and everything to lose by stealing it? They surely would not have chosen deprivation and being tortured to death for a charade. If this had been a conspiracy, certainly one of the disciples would have broken ranks under the pain of torture and told the truth. But it never happened.

Perhaps the women on Easter morning went to the wrong tomb. When they found it empty, they assumed Jesus had risen. This argument doesn't withstand scrutiny either. Not only did Mary Magdalene and the other women find the tomb empty, but Peter and John checked it out for themselves. Don't you think they would have made absolutely sure this was the right tomb before they risked their lives by proclaiming that Jesus' body was gone? Besides, Joseph of Arimathea knew where his own tomb was located, and he certainly would have told them. If all of them came down with collective amnesia, surely the Jewish and Roman authorities would have pointed out, "No, here's the real tomb" so they could show that Jesus was still inside.

History's unanimous testimony is that on Easter morning the tomb was empty. There was no motive for the Jewish authorities, the Romans, or the disciples to steal the body. The only explanation that fits the facts is that Jesus really did return from the dead.

Read Matthew 27:62–28:15.

[Q] Why do you suppose Matthew included the account in 27:62–66?

The Resurrection

Leader's Guide

[Q] Looking at the details of the Resurrection, what stands out to you as important?

[Q] What about the guards' report in 28:11–15 sounds similar to reasons for rejecting the Resurrection today?

[Q] How do you suppose the early disciples answered that accusation?

Optional Activity:

Purpose: *To put ourselves in the mindset of those who lived at the time of Jesus' resurrection.*

Activity: *Form teams of three or four. Ask each group to imagine that they are writers for the Jerusalem Chronicle, reporting on the day that Jesus was resurrected. Ask one or more groups to tell the story from the perspective of believing it to be true. Ask one or more of the other groups to tell it from the perspective of believing it to be false. After presenting the different accounts, ask those who thought the story to be true to defend their views to those who thought it to be false.*

Teaching Point Three: The witnesses of the Resurrection are reliable.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–20.

During the next 40 days, Jesus appeared a dozen times to more than 515 different individuals. He talked with people. He ate with people. He even invited one skeptic to put his fingers in the nail holes in his hands, and to put his hand in his side where the spear had been thrust into him. Five-hundred-fifteen eyewitnesses. That is a lot of people. If we held a trial on the question of whether Jesus returned from the dead, and if we were to call each one of the 515 witnesses to give an account of their encounter with Jesus for just 15 minutes, and if we did it around the clock, we'd be sitting there for nearly six days. After sitting through 128 hours of eyewitness accounts, how many people would leave unconvinced of Jesus' resurrection? This number and quality of eyewitnesses is unprecedented.

Lee Strobel shares:

When I was a skeptic, I tried to poke holes in the eyewitnesses' testimonies. Maybe they were hallucinating. When I talked to psychologists about that, they told me that was not possible. Hallucinations are like dreams. They're individual events that can't be shared between people. One expert said, "If you had 515 people all having the same hallucination at the same time, that would be a bigger miracle than the Resurrection itself."

I then thought that the eyewitnesses' accounts of the resurrection were an example of



The Resurrection

Leader's Guide

group think. This occurs when people in a group subtly encourage one another through the power of suggestion to see an image that isn't really there. I asked Dr. Collins, president of a national association of psychologists, if this was possible.

“The circumstances would have been all wrong for this sort of thing to have occurred,” he said. “The disciples were not anticipating a resurrection. The idea of Jesus coming back from the dead would run totally contrary to all of their Jewish, cultural, and religious beliefs. So they weren't primed for that sort of thing to have happened. Besides, Jesus ate with them. He talked back to them. He appeared at numerous times before all kinds of people, which runs contrary to this theory.”

The appearances of Jesus were not hallucinations, not wish fulfillments, and not mythology. They were real historical events that revolutionized people's lives. Think about what happened to the disciples. History tells us that before Easter, they were dejected because they thought their leader was gone forever. After the crucifixion, the disciples were hiding behind closed doors, afraid they might be put to death. Yet after Easter, these same men were out boldly proclaiming that Jesus Christ was alive. Suddenly these once cowardly individuals were transformed. History tells us all but one of those disciples suffered violent deaths. Yet none of them ever disavowed their testimony that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who literally and bodily appeared to them.

Still, if we look through history, we see all kinds of crackpots willing to die for their religious beliefs. Terrorists strap explosives to their bodies, walk into a crowded marketplace, and blow themselves up. Why? Because they sincerely believe they will instantly go to paradise.

People will die for their religious beliefs if they are convinced their beliefs are true. People will not die for religious beliefs they know are false. The disciples knew that Jesus had risen from the dead because they were there. Because they knew it was true, they were willing to die for it.

[Q] Why do you suppose some of the Corinthians were saying that there was no resurrection of the dead (v. 12)?

[Q] Why would our faith be useless if there is no resurrection of the dead (v. 14)?

[Q] What does this tell us about choosing to believe one part of the Bible while rejecting other parts?

[Q] Why are we to be pitied if we only have hope in this life (v. 19)?



The Resurrection

Leader's Guide

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

Sir Lionel Luckhoo was right. The evidence is overwhelming: early accounts plus empty tomb plus eyewitness testimony equals the certainty that Jesus Christ was indeed resurrected from the dead as the ultimate authentication of his claim to be the unique Son of God.

Look at all other religious leaders. Confucius, Abraham, and Mohammed are all in the grave. But Jesus Christ isn't. His tomb is empty. Jesus Christ alone possessed the power to overcome the grave.

The evidence points convincingly to Jesus Christ having told the truth when he said in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."

Action Point: The power that raised Christ from the dead is available to you. What do you need to trust him with? Spend time meditating on 1 Corinthians 15 and share your findings with someone this week.

—Study by Lee Strobel, with JoHannah Reardon



The Resurrection

Participant's Guide

Participant's Guide

The Resurrection

The evidence is overwhelming that Jesus rose from the dead.

What does Jesus' resurrection mean? It means that Jesus is who he claimed to be, that he has the power he claimed to have, and that we have hope for this life and the one to come. This study will look at the evidence that Jesus is truly alive today by looking at the events of 2,000 years ago.



Scripture: [Matthew 27:62–28:15](#)

Based On: The [PreachingToday.com](#) sermon "The Truth About the Resurrection," by Lee Strobel.



The Resurrection

Participant's Guide

Part 1 Identify the Issue

In 1 Corinthians 15:17 the apostle Paul wrote “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.” The resurrection of Jesus is the linchpin of Christianity. It is the ultimate authentication of Jesus Christ’s claim that he is the unique Son of God.

Part 2 Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching Point One: Evidence shows the Resurrection is not a created myth.

Teaching Point Two: Evidence proves the tomb was empty.

Teaching Point Three: The witnesses of the Resurrection are reliable.

Part 3 Apply Your Findings

The evidence is overwhelming: early accounts plus empty tomb plus eyewitness testimony equals the certainty that Jesus Christ was indeed resurrected from the dead as the ultimate authentication of his claim to be the unique Son of God.

Look at all other religious leaders. Confucius, Abraham, and Mohammed are all in the grave. But Jesus Christ isn’t. His tomb is empty. Jesus Christ alone possessed the power to overcome the grave.

The evidence points convincingly to Jesus Christ having told the truth when he said in John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.”

—Study by Lee Strobel, with JoHannah Reardon