

LESSON 8

April 20, 2025

Unit II: Christ's All-sufficient Sacrifice

They Couldn't Keep Him Down

DEVOTIONAL READING: Hebrews 2:1-13

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Matthew 27:24–28:10

PRINT PASSAGES: Matthew 27:39-40, 45-54; 28:1-10

KEY VERSE

As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. (Matthew 28:9, KJV)

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Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. (Matthew 28:9, NIV)

LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Examine how the death and resurrection of Jesus borrow meanings from the Temple and Hebrew Bible's sacrificial system.
- Rejoice in Jesus' resurrection.
- Go and tell others how they can know the risen Christ.

*KEY TERMS

Centurion (27:54)—Greek: *hekatontarchés* or *hekatontarchos* (hek-at-on-tar'-khace): a captain of one hundred men (used in discussing the Roman army).

Countenance (28:3)—Greek: *idea* (id-eh'-ah): form; outward "appearance" (NIV).

Raiment (28:3)—Greek: *endyma* (en'-doo-mah): clothing; an outer garment; vestment; cloak; "clothes" (NIV).

Reviled (27:39)—Greek: *blasphēmeō* (blas-fay-meh'-o): spoke evil of; railed on; vilified; defamed; used insulting words to demoralize (humiliate); "hurled insults" (NIV).

Sepulchre (28:1)—Greek: *taphos* (taf'-os): a burial, grave; a burial place, monument, memorial; the resting place of a deceased individual; "tomb" (NIV).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

INTRODUCTION

Over centuries, countless pivotal events have shaped our world, motivating positive and



The Biblical Context

Matthew primarily wrote his gospel for a Jewish audience to present Jesus as the Messiah and Israel's eternal King. Matthew's use of fulfillment citations demonstrates this. This refers to how Old Testament Scriptures are fulfilled in Jesus' words and actions throughout the gospel. In this way, Matthew's presentation of Jesus in his book follows Old Testament prophecies that a Jewish audience would be able to understand.

He begins his narrative with Jesus' lineage, birth, early life, and preparation for ministry (see Matthew 1–4:11). Within the framework of his account regarding Jesus' ministry, Matthew arranges His teachings into five major discourses: the Sermon on the Mount (see chapters 5–7), instructions to the Twelve (see chapter 10), parables regarding the kingdom (see chapters 13 and 18), and the Olivet Discourse (see chapters 24–25). Matthew climaxes his account with a detailed description of Jesus' crucifixion, death, and resurrection (see chapters 26–28). These final chapters are significant for two reasons. One, they present salvation's central theme—Jesus took the world's sin upon Himself on the Cross, so that through His death, burial, and resurrection, salvation would be possible for those separated from God by sin. Second, these final chapters show the completion of Jesus' mission and His commission to His disciples.

negative changes in people's lives. Andy Gregory, a writer for *The Independent*, shared findings from a survey in which eight thousand people across eight countries picked the twentieth century's most remarkable moments (Gregory, A. [2019, 03 June]; The fifty most amazing moments of the twentieth century. *The Independent*.) Highlights included the end of World War II in 1945, the first organ transplant in 1954, the historic moon landing on July 20, 1969, the election of Barack Obama as the first black U.S. president in 2008, Martin Luther King's iconic "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963, and the sending of the first text message in 1992.

Yet, from a Christian viewpoint, none of these events outshine the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Central to Christianity, the Resurrection is the heart of the Christian message, referenced in all four Gospels. The apostle Paul emphasized its critical nature, asserting that our faith and teachings would be empty without it. The Resurrection showcases God's unmatched power—demonstrating that the Creator of life can restore it after death—and affirms Jesus Christ's identity as the Son of God and the awaited Messiah. Beyond offering assurance of salvation and eternal life, the Resurrection underscores the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the significance of sacrificial rites, which prefigured Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the Cross. As we commemorate Resurrection Sunday, let's embrace the profound truth and victorious joy it brings to every believer's heart.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Misguided Mockery (Matthew 27:39-40)

KJV

39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,
40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself.
If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

NIV

39 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads
40 and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”

Matthew 27 is Matthew’s account of Jesus’ trial, mockery, crucifixion, and death. While Jesus hung on the cross, He was subjected to continual public mockery and verbal abuse, fulfilling Psalm 22:7—“All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads” (ESV). In ridicule, they recalled His declaration that He would destroy the Temple and, three days later, raise it up again and challenged Him to save Himself by coming down from the cross if He was God’s Son (**verses 39-40**). Their spiritual blindness prevented these mockers from understanding that Jesus predicted His death and resurrection when He made that statement. The reality was that remaining on the cross proved that He was indeed God’s Son. It was necessary for Jesus to die for others, so He chose to patiently endure their misguided insults. The mockery and insults likely continued while Jesus suffered the intense pain and shame of crucifixion. Yet, He was born to die and bridge the sin barrier separating humanity from God. Therefore, He endured the humiliation of being mocked by the cosmopolitan crowd who passed the site of His crucifixion.

Jesus did not come to save His life but to give it as a ransom for sinners. The mockery of the misguided crowd at Calvary is a cautionary tale for believers who, failing to study the Scriptures, risk falling prey to the kind of erroneous biblical interpretations that cause such misbehavior. Additionally, Jesus’ patient endurance of the humiliation and shame of the Cross illustrates the depth of God’s love and the scope of His grace toward sinners. Believers facing opposition because of their faith should commit themselves to following His example.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Which spiritual disciplines enable the faith community to persevere through mockery, ridicule, and humiliation because of their faith?

Rejection by the Father (*Matthew 27:45-54*)

KJV

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.
46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.
48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.
49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.
50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.
51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,
53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

NIV

45 From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land.

46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

49 The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split

52 and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

53 They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”

Jesus’ crucifixion began at the third hour (9:00 a.m.). Matthew notes that from the sixth hour (noon) until the ninth (3:00 p.m.), a supernatural darkness came over the land (**verse 45**). During this period, Jesus became the world’s sin offering and was forsaken by the Father. The trauma of this break in their eternal relationship caused Jesus to ask why He had been abandoned by His Father (**verse 46**). His words are a direct quote from Psalm 22:1, further proving the credibility of Old Testament prophecies referring to His crucifixion. The similarity between the words *Eloi* (“my God”) and *Elijah* in Greek prompted some to think Jesus called Elijah to help Him. One bystander rushed to get a sponge soaked in sour wine, placed it on a reed, and offered it to moisten His vocal cords so that He could speak more clearly (**verses 47-48**). Others jeered mockingly and waited skeptically to see if Elijah would come to deliver Him (**verse 49**). Jesus had come for this very purpose and had no intention of being rescued. Therefore, He gave up His spirit with one last loud cry and committed it to God (**verse 50**). Christ’s death for the world’s sin was divinely timed and occurred at the exact moment that God determined.

His timely death set in motion three significant events (**verses 51-53**). First, the Temple veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom, symbolizing unrestricted access to God’s presence. Second, a great earthquake shook the earth, split rocks, and opened tombs. Finally, deceased saints were resurrected, entered Jerusalem, and appeared

to many. These unusual happenings accompanying the Crucifixion so impressed and frightened a Roman centurion and other guards that they confessed that Jesus was the Son of God (**verse 54**). This confession was most likely not a confession of faith but an acknowledgment that there was something unusual about Him. However, even the wildest human speculations about the events surrounding Christ's death on the Cross must not distract from its significance. Jesus died for one purpose—to take away sin once and for all for those who accept Him as Savior.

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Why is Christ's death on the Cross as significant as His resurrection?

“Come See; Go Tell!” (*Matthew 28:1-10*)

KJV

IN THE end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

NIV

AFTER THE Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.

3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.

4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.

6 “He is not here; 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 is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

9 Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.

10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Matthew describes the early morning visit to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body by the women who lingered at the cross after He died in these verses. The group included “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” (**verse 1**). Ironically, it is challenging to imagine them not anticipating His resurrection because He repeatedly told His followers that He would rise again. The events of their visit unfolded as follows: An angel of the Lord descended in an earthquake, rolled back the stone, and sat on it. The angel’s dazzling appearance left the soldiers who were guarding the tomb paralyzed with fear (**verses 2-4**). Upon their arrival, the angel addressed the women, encouraged them not to be fearful, and invited them to see the place where Christ’s body had been (**verses 5-6**). What they saw was only His graveclothes and the cloth that had wrapped Jesus’ head lying in its place. The angel then instructed the women to go quickly and tell Jesus’ disciples about His resurrection and that He would meet them in Galilee (**verse 7**). The women obeyed by hurrying from the tomb fearfully, yet joyfully, to deliver the Good News to the disciples (**verse 8**). While they were going, Jesus met and greeted them, and they responded by worshipping Him (**verse 9**). Jesus instructed them not to be afraid and to inform the disciples that they would see Him in Galilee (**verse 10**).

These verses bring a victorious climax to Christ’s death as the ultimate expression of God’s love for humanity, affirming the Resurrection as Christ’s triumph over sin and death. The angel’s “come see the place where He lay” was followed by the command to “go and tell” the good news of the Resurrection to His disciples who should have anticipated and expected it. Those who know Christ as Savior should not need a reminder of the Resurrection’s significance. Believers should rejoice in the Resurrection with enthusiasm and go tell others about how they, too, can know the risen Savior.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can the faith community’s worship and witness continuously magnify the significance of the Resurrection?

A CLOSING THOUGHT

Although this is Resurrection Sunday, we must also celebrate Jesus’ death on the Cross for its significance in God’s plan of salvation. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are inseparable, spiritually relevant events. Without the atoning sacrifice on the Cross, every soul would still be in sin, unforgiven, unsaved, unloved, and eternally separated from God. Jesus died for sinners, *and* He rose from the dead. The Resurrection authenticates His victory over sin and

death. If there is no Cross, there is no forgiveness of sin, and apart from the Resurrection, we have no salvation and no hope of eternal life.

YOUR LIFE

Many churches proclaim that “every Sunday is Resurrection Sunday” when, in reality, every single day should be significant for believers because Christ’s resurrection guarantees eternal life. How often do you celebrate Jesus’ resurrection? Consider making its celebration part of your daily meditation as an expression of your gratitude for being justified before God through salvation.

YOUR WORLD!

As you celebrate Resurrection Sunday, reflectively consider the countless persons who do not know Jesus as Savior. The angel instructed the women not only to “come and see” but also to “go and tell.” Likewise, make “go and tell” your challenge—spread the good news of the Resurrection so that others may come to know Jesus and His gift of salvation and eternal life.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, today we rejoice in Jesus’ resurrection. As we celebrate, we realize and accept our responsibility to go and tell others how they can know the victorious, risen Savior. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week’s Lesson)

Next week, we explore John’s vision of Christ’s being celebrated as the “slaughtered lamb” sacrificed for the world’s sins (Revelation 5:1-10).

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, April 21	“Here Is the Lamb of God!”	(John 1:29-36)
TUESDAY, April 22	“The Lord Has Become My Salvation”	(Psalm 118:1-14)
WEDNESDAY, April 23	“Live and Not Die”	(Psalm 118:15-29)
THURSDAY, April 24	“Worthy Ransom”	(1 Peter 1:13-25)
FRIDAY, April 25	“Celebrate God”	(Psalm 99)
SATURDAY, April 26	“Live in the Light”	(Revelation 21:9-16, 21-27)
SUNDAY, April 27	“The Slaughtered, Conquering Lamb”	(Revelation 5:1-10)

Notes
