

Crucified *and* Risen



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Gen. 3:1–6, Luke 22:39–46, 2 Cor. 13:8, Luke 22:53, Matt. 12:30, 1 Cor. 15:14.*

Memory Text: “‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again’” (*Luke 24:7, NKJV*).

From childhood Jesus was conscious that He had come to this earth to fulfill His Father’s will (*Luke 2:41–50*). He taught, healed, and ministered with an unwavering commitment to obey the Father. Now the time had come, after celebrating the Last Supper, to walk alone, to affirm God’s will, to be betrayed and denied, to be tried and crucified, and to rise victorious over death.

Throughout His life Jesus knew about the inevitability of the cross. Many times in the Gospels, the word *must* is used in relationship to the sufferings and death of Jesus (*Luke 17:25, 22:37, 24:7, Matt. 16:21, Mark 8:31, 9:12, John 3:14*). He *must* go to Jerusalem. He *must* suffer. He *must* be rejected. He *must* be lifted up, and so on. Nothing would deter the Son of God from going to Golgotha. He denounced, as coming from Satan (*Matt. 16:22, 23*), any suggestion to reject the cross. He was convinced that He “must go . . . suffer . . . be killed, and be raised” (*vs. 21, NKJV*). To Jesus, the journey to the cross was not an option; it was a “must” (*Luke 24:25, 26, 46*), a part of the divine “mystery . . . kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people” (*Col. 1:26, NIV*).

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 27.

Gethsemane: The Fearsome Struggle

At the dawn of history, God created Adam and Eve and placed them in a beautiful garden blessed with all that they needed for a life of joy. Soon something extraordinary happened: Satan appeared (*Genesis 3*). He tempted the first couple and then plunged the young earth into a mighty controversy between good and evil, between God and Satan.

Now, in God’s own time, another garden (*Luke 22:39–46*) became a mighty battleground where the war between truth and falsehood, between righteousness and sin, and between God’s plan for human salvation and Satan’s goal for human destruction raged.

In Eden the world was plunged into the disaster of sin; in Gethsemane the world’s ultimate victory was assured. Eden saw the tragic triumph of self asserting itself against God; Gethsemane showed self surrendering itself to God and revealing the victory over sin.

Compare what happened in Eden (*Gen. 3:1–6*) with what happened in Gethsemane (*Luke 22:39–46*). **What was the big difference in what happened in both gardens?**

Gethsemane stands for two crucial things: first, for a most vicious attempt of Satan to derail Jesus from God’s mission and purpose; next, for the noblest example of reliance on God’s strength to accomplish His will and purpose. Gethsemane shows that, however strong the battle is and however weak the self is, victory is certain to those who have experienced the strength of prayer. As Jesus so famously prayed: “ ‘Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done’ ” (*Luke 22:42, NKJV*).

All the hosts of Satan were arraigned against Jesus; the disciples, whom He loved so much, were numb to His suffering. Drops of blood were falling drop by drop; the betrayer’s kiss was just a breath away; and the priests and the temple guards were about to pounce. Yet, Jesus showed us that prayer and submission to God’s will give the needed strength to the soul to bear life’s great burdens.

Next time you are severely tempted, how can you have the kind of experience Jesus had in Gethsemane as opposed to what Adam and Eve had in Eden? What is the crucial factor that makes all the difference between them?

Judas

“Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve” (*Luke 22:3, NIV*). **No doubt Satan worked hard to get all the disciples. What was it about Judas, though, that enabled the adversary to succeed so well with him, in contrast to the others?**

Luke tells how Jesus prayed alone all night in the mountains before He chose His disciples (*Luke 6:12–16*). And Jesus believed that the Twelve were God’s gift to Him (*John 17:6–9*). Was Judas really an answer to prayer? How are we to understand what is going on here other than that even in Judas’s betrayal and apostasy, God’s purpose was to be fulfilled? (*See 2 Cor. 13:8*.)

Judas, who had so much potential, who could have been another Paul, instead went in a completely wrong direction. What could have been a Gethsemane experience for him was, instead, like the Fall in Eden.

“He had fostered the evil spirit of avarice until it had become the ruling motive of his life. The love of mammon overbalanced his love for Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 716.

When Jesus fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish (*Luke 9:10–17*), Judas was the first to grasp the political value of the miracle and “set on foot the project to take Christ by force and make Him king.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 719. But Jesus denounced the attempt, and there began Judas’s disenchantment: “His hopes were high. His disappointment was bitter.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 719. Obviously Judas, as did others, believed that Jesus would use His extraordinary powers to establish a worldly kingdom, and Judas clearly had wanted a place in that kingdom. How tragic: his desire for a place in a temporal kingdom that never came caused him to lose a place in an eternal kingdom that was sure to come.

Another time, when a devout follower of Jesus chose to anoint His feet with a costly ointment, Judas decried her act as an economic waste (*John 12:1–8*). All Judas could see was money, and his love of money overshadowed his love of Jesus. This fixation with money and power led Judas to put a price tag on the priceless gift of heaven (*Matt. 26:15*). From then on, “Satan entered Judas” (*Luke 22:3, NKJV*). And Judas became a lost soul.

There is nothing wrong with status, power, or money. The problem comes when these things (or anything) overshadow our faithfulness to God. Why is it always important to take stock of ourselves so that we don’t become as self-deceived as was Judas?

Either for Him or Against Him

For all else that it entails, the Cross is also the great divider of history: the divider between faith and unbelief, between betrayal and acceptance, and between eternal life and death. There is no middle ground for any human being concerning the Cross. In the end, we are either on one side or the other.

“ ‘He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad’ ” (*Matt. 12:30, NKJV*). Strong words, and they can make us a bit uncomfortable, but Jesus is simply expressing what is real and what the truth entails for those who are immersed in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. We are with Jesus or with Satan.

Yes, it’s that stark.

How did the following people relate to Jesus, and what lessons can we learn from their examples that can help us in our own relationship to God and how we relate to the Cross?

Sanhedrin (*Luke 22:53*). What mistakes did these people make, why did they make them, and how can we protect ourselves from doing something similar concerning how they viewed Jesus?

Pilate (*Luke 23:1–7, 13–25*). What led Pilate to say, “ ‘I find no fault in Him’ ” (*John 19:4, NKJV*) and at the same time sentence Him to be crucified? What can we learn from his mistake in failing to do what he knew was right?

Herod (*Luke 23:6–12*). What was his big mistake, and what can we learn from it?

The two thieves (*Luke 23:39–43*). Two sinners look at the same cross and have two different reactions. How does this scene reveal the either-or aspect of salvation—that is, we are either on one side of the great controversy or on the other?

He Is Risen

Early Sunday morning the women went to the tomb with a single purpose—to complete the burial ritual. Despite the time they had spent with Jesus, they had not truly understood what was to happen. They were certainly not expecting an empty tomb, or to be told by heavenly messengers: “He is not here, but is risen” (*Luke 24:6*).

In the first few chapters of Acts alone there are at least eight references to the resurrection of Jesus (*see Acts 1:22; 2:14–36; 3:14, 15; 4:1, 2, 10, 12, 33; 5:30–32*). **Why was the resurrection of Jesus so pivotal in apostolic preaching and in the faith of the early church? Why is it still so crucial for us today, as well?**

The women were firsthand eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. They rushed to share this good news with others, but no one believed them (*Luke 24:11*). Instead, the apostles dismissed the greatest story in redemptive history as “idle tales” of exhausted and grieving women (*vss. 10, 11*).

How soon they were to learn just how wrong they were!

The resurrection of Christ is foundational to God’s redemptive act and to the totality of Christian faith and existence. The apostle Paul makes that very clear: “If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty” (*1 Cor. 15:14, NKJV*). It is empty, or vain, because only in Christ’s resurrection can we find the hope that is ours. Without that hope, our lives here end, and they end for eternity. Christ’s life didn’t end in a tomb, and the great promise is that ours won’t either.

“If Christ is not risen from the dead, the long course of God’s redemptive acts to save his people ends in a dead-end street, in a tomb. If the resurrection of Christ is not reality, then we have no assurance that God is the *living* God, for death has the last word. Faith is futile because the object of that faith has not vindicated himself as the Lord of life. Christian faith is then incarcerated in the tomb along with the final and highest self-revelation of God in Christ—if Christ is indeed dead.”—George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 318.

“All Things Must Be Fulfilled”

Read Luke 24:13–49, which tells us about events immediately after Christ’s resurrection. In the various encounters, what does Jesus point to in order to help these people understand what happened to Him, and why is that so important, even for us today in our witness to the world?

The resurrection of Jesus should have been enough evidence to establish the Messiahship of Jesus. Beaten and brutalized before being crucified and eventually pierced, Jesus was then wrapped and placed in a tomb. Even if, as some have ridiculously suggested, He had survived both the cross and the burial, a bloodied and battered and weakened Jesus, somehow staggering from the tomb, would not have been anyone’s idea of a victorious Messiah.

Nevertheless, there Jesus was, alive and well. He walked several miles with the two men on the road to Emmaus. And yet even then, before revealing who He was, Jesus pointed them to the Scriptures, giving them a firm biblical foundation for their faith in Him.

Then, when He appeared to the disciples, showed them His flesh, and ate with them, Jesus did more: He pointed them to the Word of God: “‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things’ ” (*Luke 24:46–48, NKJV*).

Here, too, Jesus not only pointed to the Scriptures (besides the evidence that He was actually alive and among them), but He used the Scriptures to help them understand exactly what had happened to Him. Also, He directly linked His resurrection with the mission to preach the gospel to all nations.

So, even with all the powerful evidence proving who Jesus was, He always pointed His followers back to the Word of God. After all, without the Word of God among us today, how would we know of our calling and mission to preach the gospel to the world? How would we even know what the gospel was? The Bible is, then, as central to us today as it was to Jesus and His disciples.

How much time do you spend with the Bible? How does it impact how you live, the choices you make, and how you treat others?

Further Study: “The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we not then exalt the cross of Christ? The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1132.

Discussion Questions:

1 As Christians we have to live by faith; that is, we have to believe in something that we can't fully prove, that we don't have direct eyewitness evidence for. Of course, people do that all the time in a lot of things. For instance, in the context of science, one author wrote: “In summary, we have direct evidence for a surprisingly small number of the beliefs we hold.”—Richard DeWitt, *Worldviews: An Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science*, 2nd ed. (Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.: John Wiley and Sons, 2010), p. 15. Nevertheless, we have many very good reasons for our faith, for the things we believe in. In the context of the Great Commission, for instance, look at what Jesus said to the disciples: “ ‘And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come’ ” (*Matt. 24:14, NKJV*). Now, think about the time that Jesus spoke these words. How large was His following at the time? How many people believed in Him or even had any understanding of who He was and what He was going to accomplish? Think, too, about all the opposition that the early church was to face, for centuries, in the Roman Empire. Keeping all these facts in mind, discuss just how remarkable a prediction this statement of Jesus was and how it should help us to trust in the Word of God.

2 Dwell on the Ellen G. White passage above. How does this help us to understand just how universal the issues of sin really are? *Even the angels are not secure except by looking to Jesus.* What does this mean?

New Life From Death

MASAAKI, JAPAN

As a mortician, I'm surrounded by death every day as I prepare bodies for burial and direct funerals. For years, I have watched people mourn the deaths of loved ones and go through the ceremonies to assure that the deceased have peaceful and speedy journeys from this life to the next.

Japan is largely secular, but most people honor their ancestors by prayers, elaborate ceremonies, and worship rituals. At certain times during the year, families visit their ancestral burial sites and offer gifts and prayers. My family was no different; we prayed to our ancestors.

As I watched the leaders of various religions conduct funeral ceremonies, I noticed that most funerals involved great sadness and much weeping. But I noticed that during Christian funerals, sorrow was tempered with hope. They seemed to have faith that they would see their loved ones again. No such hope existed for most people. I began to wonder whose beliefs were correct. Just where did the spirit go after a person died?

I began watching Christians more closely. Christians, I quickly saw, faced death with a deep-rooted faith in their God. Their pastors showed great compassion toward the grieving family and spoke of their hope to see their loved ones again. One day I was in charge of a funeral in a Seventh-day Adventist church. After my preparations were completed, I sat down alone in the empty church and let the peacefulness of the sanctuary wrap around me. I thought about the times when death came close to me, the time when I almost drowned in the ocean, and the time I should have died in a motorcycle accident. As I remembered these experiences, I was surprised that instead of feeling fear, I felt a deep peace. I sensed that I was not alone.

The next morning I visited the Adventist pastor. We talked about God and the pastor assured me that Jesus wanted to be part of my life. I asked him to help me learn more. I was eager to know how the Christian faith gave its followers such hope. We studied together for several months, and I learned a lot about the God who not only created us but came to live and die so that we could live with Him forever. I had never heard of such love!

I prayed my first prayer, and God filled my heart with a peace and joy I had never known. My family, friends, and colleagues noticed the changes in my life and asked what had happened. I told them that I had met the living God, Jesus Christ, and had accepted His gift of salvation.

Now when I conduct a funeral for someone who is not a Christian, I want the grieving family to notice a difference in my life. I continue studying the Bible and learning about God's love so I can answer people who ask about my faith, and know how to encourage the sad families I meet every day.

Adapted from a story by Charlotte Ishkanian.

Next quarter's guide, entitled *Missionaries*, by Børge Schantz, will look at mission first and foremost as God's means for communicating the gospel to those who don't know it. Mission is a core part of God's sovereign activity in the process of redeeming humanity. Our study will examine how God's eternal purpose has been accomplished in the lives of individuals in the Bible whom He has used to be missionaries to the lost.

In the end, the Christian mission is God's mission, not ours. It originated in the heart of God. It is based on the love of God. And it is accomplished by the will of God.

Mission is, at the most basic level, letting the whole world know about Jesus and about what He has done for each of us and about what He promises to do for us, now and for eternity. In short, we who know about those promises—we have been called to tell others about them as well.

Lesson 1—The Missionary Nature of God

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **God Created Man and Woman** (*Genesis 1, Genesis 2*)

MONDAY: **Free Will** (*Genesis 2:15–17*)

TUESDAY: **The Fall** (*Genesis 3:6, 7*)

WEDNESDAY: **God's Initiative to Save Us** (*Genesis 3:9*)

THURSDAY: **Metaphors of Mission** (*Matthew 5:13, 14*)

Memory Text—*Isaiah 55:4, NIV*

Sabbath Gem: Before the world began, God had the plan of salvation, in order to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

Lesson 2—The First Missionary

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **The Call of Abraham** (*Genesis 12:1–3*)

MONDAY: **Abraham's Testimony to Ten Kings** (*Genesis 14:8–24*)

TUESDAY: **Exemplar of Faith** (*Genesis 15:6, Galatians 3:6*)

WEDNESDAY: **Abraham, the Wanderer** (*Genesis 12:6, 7; Genesis 22:1–14*)

THURSDAY: **Abraham: A Missionary in His Own House** (*Genesis 18:18, 19*)

Memory Text—*Galatians 3:6–8, NIV*

Sabbath Gem: God wants us to be, just as God's faithful servant Abraham was, a light to the nations, a light to those who needed to know the Lord.

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