

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: April 1, 2018

Lesson Title: "Assurance of the Resurrection"

Lesson Passage: John 20:1-9; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

ABOUT THIS LESSON

The lesson passage begins with John's account of the discovery of the empty tomb by Mary Magdalene, Peter and another disciple. Then we go to Paul's inspired comments concerning the meaning of the resurrection in his letter to the Christians in Corinth.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Describe what happened at the empty tomb, according to the account in John's Gospel. (2) Cite at least one of Paul's arguments for the significance of the resurrection.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Begin with this: Millions of Americans think of Easter as a time for wearing new spring fashions and having egg hunts for children. But, as Christians, we look upon Easter as the celebration of one of the most pivotal events in history, the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection is a fundamental tenet of the Christian faith. Paul made this clear when he wrote, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:14, 17). So, as we examine the resurrection story in John's Gospel and in Paul's Corinthian letter, we are at the very heart of the Christian faith.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *To encourage discussion of John 20:1-9, pose these questions:*

(1) Why did Mary come to the tomb while it was still dark? (Visiting the tomb on the sabbath, our Saturday, would have violated Jewish law. So, Mary went as early as possible on Sunday morning.) (2) Why did she run away immediately upon discovering the empty tomb? (In those days a tomb was closed by rolling a huge wheel-shaped stone, weighing no less than a ton, across the entrance. It took several strong men to move the stone, for once it was in place across the tomb's entrance it would have to be pushed back up a slight incline. (The Jewish leaders had sealed Jesus' tomb with such a stone, Matthew 27:66). So, of course, Mary was shocked to find the tomb open, and naturally assumed that someone had stolen the body of Jesus (Jn. 20:2b, 13b). The situation was too much for her to face alone, so she ran for help. (3) Who went back to the tomb with Mary? (Simon Peter and the "beloved disciple." Startled to hear that the tomb was empty, they ran to see for themselves.) (4) What happened when they arrived at the tomb? (They entered the tomb; Peter first, then the other disciple.) (5) What did the 'beloved disciple' see in the tomb that caused him to believe? (The grave clothes were still lying there. Had the body been stolen, these probably would not have been left behind. And note that the grave clothes were lying undisturbed, as though the body had evaporated.)

2. *Call attention to the second selection in the lesson passage.*

1 Corinthians 15:20-28: *Observe that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15 because some people in Corinth were denying the resurrection, as indicated by his question in 1 Cor. 15:12. Then highlight four important truths in*

1 Cor. 15:20-26: **(1) THE FIRST-FRUITS (v. 20)**. The Jewish Passover Feast was a great harvest festival. (Read Lev. 23:10-11). *EXPLANATION*: Before any other grain could be harvested, the “first-fruits,” had to be taken to the priest as an offering to the Lord. Some sheaves of barley would be cut from the field and brought to the temple. There, after being ground into barley meal, it would be given as an offering to God. Until this was done, barley could neither be harvested, nor sold in shops, nor made into bread. Similarly, no one else could be “harvested” from the dead until after Jesus had become the “first-fruits” of the grave. His resurrection was God’s promise of the harvest to come. **(2) THE LAST ADAM (v.22)**. (The terminology “last Adam” comes from v. 45 but the thought in v. 22 is similar.) *EXPLANATION*: Like someone who opens the door of a home to a murderous marauder, the first Adam introduced death into the world. (See Rom. 5:12.) Jesus, the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45) offers life through his resurrection to all who are “in Christ” through faith (read Rom. 6:4). Just as Adam inaugurated an old humanity condemned by sin and death, Christ has created a new humanity destined for eternal life. **(3) THE CONQUERING KING (VV. 23-25)**. The reference to “his coming” takes us to one of the major truths of the gospel, the return of Christ (v. 23). When he comes, “those who belong to Christ” will become partakers of the resurrection life. Then will come the end of this age (v. 24), when Christ the Risen Lord will put down all the opponents of the rule of God, and will hand over the Kingdom to the Father (read Psalm 110:1-2). **(4) THE VICTOR OVER DEATH (vv. 26-28)**. Suggest that Robert Crawshaw, a 17th century Anglican cleric, captured the meaning of I Cor. 15:26-28 in this poem:

“Christ when He died, Deceived the cross,
And on death’s side Threw all the loss:
The captive world awak’d and found
The prisoners loose, the jailor bound.”

CLOSING THE LESSON

Conclude with these comments: The first disciples of Jesus were not immediately disposed to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. They had to be convinced that this had actually occurred. Had they not become convinced, they would not have preached the resurrection, because it would be extremely dangerous for them to assert that Jesus, a condemned insurrectionist, was alive. Had his body still been in the grave, they would have risked imprisonment and death for a lost cause. **Then share this parting thought:** One of the most convincing evidences of the resurrection, in the eyes of our world today, is the resurrected Christian life.

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