

The Crucifixion of Jesus—Two to Six Lessons (depending on length of lesson)

See preparatory notes of explanation for the teacher below.

Lesson Scripture (for aid in preparation of both lessons) Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:35-54; Mark 15:24-39; Luke 23:32-48; John 19:17-37. (English version quotes from the New King James Version.)

Preparatory Notes of Explanation for the Teacher:

The first lesson is about the words Jesus spoke while He was on the cross, and the second is about the unusual occurrences that happened while Jesus was on the cross.

It will require a full hour to teach each of these lessons, not including other things you might do with the children. If you have less time, divide each lesson into parts according to the time you have. There are six parts to the first lesson and seven parts to the second, so it could be divided to make two or even three lessons if your teaching time is short, making four to six lessons.

Bible memory verses for both lessons:

Romans 5:8-9

First Lesson vs. 8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Second Lesson vs. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

As you teach verse 9, have the students say verse & then add to it so that at the end of these lessons they can say verses 8 & 9 together.

Lesson 1—Jesus speaks from the cross

Lesson Aim: At the conclusion of this lesson, my students will understand that Jesus’ words on the cross showed His love for us sinners. As a result, those who have not yet trusted Him will be motivated to do so, and those who have trusted Him will be motivated to share the Good News with others.

Main ideas in this lesson:

- A. Jesus was silent when he was ridiculed by passersby & people watching the crucifixion, the Roman soldiers, the chief priests, & even those who were crucified with him.

Read:

Matthew 27:39-44 39 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build <i>it</i> in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son	Mark 15:29-32 29 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, “Aha! <i>You</i> who destroy the temple and build <i>it</i> in three days,	Luke 23:35-37 And the people stood looking on.	Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its
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<p>of God, come down from the cross.”</p> <p>41 Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said,</p> <p>42 “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.</p> <p>43 He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”</p> <p>44 Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.</p>	<p>30 save Yourself, and come down from the cross!”</p> <p>31 Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said,</p> <p>“He saved others; Himself He cannot save.</p> <p>32 Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.”</p> <p>Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.</p>	<p>But even the rulers with them sneered, saying,</p> <p>“He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.”</p> <p>36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine,</p> <p>37 and saying, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.”</p>	<p>shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.</p>
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Ask questions like these--

Primary Level:

- Do you like it when someone makes fun of you?
- How does it make you feel?
- What groups of people made fun of Jesus? (Passersby, those who were watching the crucifixion, the soldiers, the rulers, the chief priests, even the robbers who were being crucified with Him)
- What bad things had Jesus done to these people that they should ridicule Him? (Nothing. Jesus did good to lots of people, but He never did anything bad to anyone.)
- What are some of the cruel things they said?
- The prophecy in Isaiah was written hundreds of years before Jesus came, and it talked about what the Messiah would do when He came. What did Isaiah say about the Messiah? (He would be afflicted, but would not open His mouth to respond.)
- Do we always have to respond when someone is making fun of us? (No, because Jesus didn't.)

Secondary Level:

- Why do you think Jesus did not respond?
- Did Jesus' lack of response show weakness or strength?
- Ridicule usually makes us angry. Why do you think Jesus did not get angry?
- Ridicule often makes us feel like hurting back the person who hurt us. These people were hurting Jesus terribly, so why do you think Jesus did not want to hurt them back?
- Sometimes people blame the Jews for killing Jesus, and the chief priests were there, ridiculing Him. Why is it not right to blame the Jews? (Roman soldiers were also involved, they, too, were there ridiculing. Jesus willingly died so that our sins could be forgiven and we could be restored to fellowship with God.)
- How was this a fulfilled prophecy? (The prophet Isaiah, writing about 600 years before Jesus, said the Messiah would be oppressed and afflicted, but would not open His mouth.)

Acting out what happened:

Choose one student to act the part of Jesus. "Jesus" stands in the middle and is completely silent. He just smiles, but does not say anything or react in any way. Other students come by and make mean, angry gestures and faces at Jesus (without saying anything or touching him). Jesus just keeps quiet.

Singing and dancing (with appropriate gestures):

He was quiet,
He did not respond,
Though they said so many mean things to Him.

He knew who He was,
And He knew why He came,
So He was quiet, simply quiet.

B. Jesus forgave those who were abusing and killing Him.

Read:

Luke 23:33 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Ask questions like these--

Primary Level:

- What was the place called where Jesus was crucified? (Calvary)
- Who was also crucified with Jesus? (Two criminals-one on his right hand & one on his left)
- What did Jesus pray for on the cross? (He asked God to forgive those who were killing Him.)

- Why did He ask forgiveness for them? (He said they did not understand what they were doing.)

Secondary Level:

- How does Jesus' prayer on the cross compare with what you might expect someone to pray in a situation like that? (We might expect someone to be angry & ask God to punish those who were hurting us.)
- Obviously the people who were crucifying Jesus knew they were killing Him. So what did Jesus mean when He said, "they know not what they do"? (They didn't understand He was really who He claimed, the Son of God, and they didn't understand He was dying for their sins.)
- How much strength does it take to forgive? (A lot, when someone is hurting you a lot.)
- Jesus was being killed when He spoke these words, yet it does not sound like He has lost hope. Why not, do you think? (Teacher, listen to the children's ideas. Bring out the fact that He knew who He was and what He came to do. He understood that the cross was an essential part of the plan. He also knew that His death would not be the end, but only the beginning.)

Acting out what happened:

Choose five children. One will act the part of Jesus, and two will be the thieves who were crucified on either hand of Jesus. The three children stand with their arms out, as if on crosses. They all show they are in great pain. Two of the other children act the part of Roman soldiers. They pretend to pound nails into the hands and feet of Jesus. Jesus cries out in great pain, and then says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Singing and dancing:

Father, forgive them
For they know not what they do. (Jesus said) repeat

C. Jesus asked John to care for His mother, Mary.

Read:

John 19:25-27 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own *home*.

Ask questions like these—

Primary Level:

- Who was standing by the cross watching? (Three Mary's—Mary the mother of Jesus, her sister Mary who was married to Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene.)
- There is also a disciple standing by, who is believed to be John. What did Jesus tell John and Mary his mother about each other? (He would be to her a son and she would be to him a mother.)
- What does this mean? (Jesus was asking John to care for his mother as a son would care for his own mother, and asking Mary to receive that care as if John were her son.)

Secondary Level:

- Who was Jesus thinking about in making this request? (About his mother, Mary)
- Why was He thinking of her in this way? (She would need care, usually given by the oldest son. Apparently Joseph had died by this time. He is not mentioned in the Gospels after the incident in the Temple when Jesus was 12 years old.)
- Do you think about yourself in times of suffering, or do you also think of others?

Acting out what happened:

Let students divide up in groups of five as much as possible. One group may have more than five. In each group, let the students choose one person to act the part of Jesus. One will be Mary, Jesus' mother, one Mary her sister, one Mary Magdalene, and one John. Extra students will be other onlookers watching the crucifixion. Jesus stands with his arms outstretched as if on the cross. All the others stand by watching and crying. Jesus speaks to Mary and says, "Woman, look, this is your son," nodding to John. He looks at John and says, "Look, this is now your mother," nodding to Mary. John and Mary look at one another and nod, "Yes."

Singing and dancing:

John, take care of Mary
 She is your mother now
 John, take real good care of her
 She is your mother now.

D. About 3 p.m., Jesus asked God why He had forsaken Him.

<p>Matthew 27: 46-48 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Some of those who stood there, when they heard <i>that</i>, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" ... The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if</p>	<p>Mark 15:34-35 & 36b And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Some of those who stood by, when they heard <i>that</i>, said, "Look, He is calling for Elijah!" ...saying, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down."</p>
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Elijah will come to save Him.”	
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Ask questions like these—

Primary Level:

- At what time did this event occur? (The ninth hour)
- The Jewish day began at sunrise, about 6 a.m. So what time would the ninth hour be in our time? (About 3 p.m.)
- What kind of a voice did Jesus use when He cried out these words? (A loud voice)
- He used Aramaic, the language of the Jews of His time. What did His words mean in English? “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”
- Have you ever felt like God had forsaken you? (Teacher, if anyone says yes, let them tell why if they want to do so. Emphasize that we may feel like God has forsaken us in hard times, but this does not mean He has done so.)
- God had not really forsaken Jesus, because Jesus’ crucifixion was a part of His plan for our salvation. However, we might say God was turning His back on Jesus for a time while He was on the cross, knowing that He would turn back to Him again. Why do you think God might have done that? What was happening when Jesus was on the cross? (Jesus was taking our sins, and God could not look at all that sin being put on Jesus.)
- The people standing around could not understand Jesus clearly. They heard the Aramaic word “Eloi”, and thought He was calling for someone. Who did they think He was calling for? (Elijah)
- What did some of the other people say? (Let Him alone. Let’s see if Elijah will come to take Him down.)

Secondary Level:

- Some Bible scholars have said that the pain Jesus felt in feeling that His father was forsaking Him may have been even worse than the physical pain of the nails and the crucifixion. Why was this such an awful feeling for Jesus? (He had lived from eternity in perfect fellowship with His Father. It felt like this fellowship was being torn in two and He was all alone.)
- What do you think the people meant when they said, “Let’s see if Elijah comes to take Him down from the cross”? (They were still ridiculing Him. They knew no one was going to take Him down.)
- Look at Matthew 26:53-54. Jesus spoke these words when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples and they came to arrest Him. “Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?” What do Jesus words tell us about Him coming down from the cross? (God had the power to do it, & Jesus had the power to do it, but it was not in His plan. His plan was to die so that we could find salvation.)

Acting out what happened:

- Have the children as a group act out Jesus saying with great anguish, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Singing and dancing:

(Sadly, in mourning)

Mm Mmm

The Father turned His back away

When He saw our sin on Jesus.

E. One of the thieves being crucified with Jesus asked him to remember him when Jesus came into His kingdom, and Jesus replied that that very day, the man would be with Him in Paradise.

Read:

Luke 23:39-43

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”

But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?”

And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Ask questions like these:

- Who blasphemed Jesus? (One of the thieves who was crucified with Him)
- How did the other thief rebuke him? (He asked him if he did not fear God and reminded him that he was under the same condemnation.)
- What request did the second thief make of Jesus? (Remember me when You come into your kingdom.)
- How did this show faith in Jesus? (The man apparently believed that Jesus was really going to set up a kingdom. Even though they were then in the act of killing Him, the man believed that Jesus would live again, for he must live again in order to set up His kingdom.)
- What was Jesus’ response to him? (Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise)
- Can people be saved even at the last hour of their life, when there is no time to prove their faith by their works? (Yes, if they truly believe. Jesus, who knows all hearts, assured this man that he would be saved.)
- Can people be saved without being baptized? (Baptism does not save us; faith in Jesus does. Even though normally baptism was the first act of obedience of the believers, in this case there was no way to baptize the man, but Jesus assured him he would be saved because of his faith.

Sing and dance:

Because you believed in Me
 I say to you,
 "Today you will be with me
 In Paradise." (Repeat)

F. Jesus said He was thirsty.

Read:

<p>Matthew 27: 48 Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled <i>it</i> with sour wine and put <i>it</i> on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink.</p>	<p>Mark 15:36a Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put <i>it</i> on a reed, and offered <i>it</i> to Him to drink,</p>	<p>John 19:28-29 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put <i>it</i> on hyssop, and put <i>it</i> to His mouth.</p>
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Ask questions like these--

Primary Level:

- When Jesus knew that His death was near, what did He say? (I thirst.)
- Why did He say that? (To fulfill the Scripture. In Psalm 69 vs 21b, many years before, a prophet had foretold that they would give the Messiah sour vinegar to drink.)
- What did they offer Him to drink? (Sour wine)
- How could He drink anything when His arms were nailed to the cross? (They dipped a sponge in the wine and put it on a stick so He could suck the wine out of the sponge.)

Secondary Level:

- Did Jesus say this for selfish reasons? (No, He said it to fulfill the prophecy of Scripture.)
- They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. The prophecy to which Jesus refers is in Psalm 69 vs 21b. It says, " They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Sour wine turns into sour wine vinegar. Why would such a thing even be around at a place of crucifixion? (It was used to dull the pain.)
- Was it a pleasant drink? (No. Do you like to drink vinegar?)

Acting out what happened:

Let half the children act the part of Jesus and the other half, the part of the soldiers giving him a drink.

- "Jesus" holds His arms out as though on the cross and says, "I thirst."

- The soldiers pretend to tie a sponge to a stick.
- They pretend to pour vinegar on the sponge.
- They hold it up to Jesus' mouth.

Singing & dancing what happened:

They gave him vinegar wine to drink. Eew! Yuk!
 'Cause every Scripture must be fulfilled. Every single one.

G. Jesus said, "It is finished", "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit" & gave up His life.

Read:

Matthew 27:50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.	Mark 15:37 And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.	Luke 23: 46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, <i>'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'</i> " Having said this, He breathed His last.	John 19:30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.
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Ask questions like these—

Primary Level:

- After Jesus took the vinegar wine, what did He say? (It is finished.)
- What kind of a voice did He use to say it? (A loud voice)
- Why do you think He used a loud voice? (Probably so everyone would be sure to hear Him.)
- What were His final words before He died? (Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.)

Secondary Level:

- When Jesus said, "It is finished," of course He meant that His physical life was finished. But did it also mean more than that? If so, what? (It meant that God's plan of redemption was complete. He had done everything needed to secure our salvation. The promise of a redeemer that God made long ago in the Garden of Eden [Genesis ch 3 vs 15] had been fulfilled.)
- Notice it does not say that Jesus died, but rather that "He gave up His spirit." Why is this significant? (They didn't take His life from Him. He willingly gave it up so that we could be saved.)
- What have you thought of Jesus' words on the cross, overall? (Teacher, let students give their reactions.)

Acting out what happened:

All the children pretend to be Jesus. In a loud voice, they shout together, "It is finished." Then on signal, they all let their heads drop and sigh, then stay very still for a moment.

Singing and dancing what happened:

Agree on a tune for "It is finished" and practice it together. Then you the teacher read a line and point to the children. Together, to the tune you have practiced, they sing, "It is finished," waving their arms in victory.

Teacher:

God promised a Savior who would destroy Satan's power.

God promised to make a way of salvation for us.

God said He would be the lamb of God.

His death would be a sacrifice for our sins.

Every Scripture would be fulfilled.

He would open the way for us to come back to God.

Children:

It is finished!

It is finished!

It is finished!

It is finished!

It is finished!

It is finished!

Application for the saved student:

Even when Jesus was suffering so greatly on the cross, He was thinking of others. He was thinking of us, of our need of salvation. This week, try to focus your thoughts on what you can do for others. You can't provide their salvation; only Jesus can do that. But you can show them His love and kindness. Ask God to show you ways to do that this week.

Invitation for the unsaved student:

When Jesus was dying on the cross, He thought of you. He was dying to pay the debt for all your sins. Yet His wonderful salvation will not be yours until you receive what He has done. Maybe you have already received Jesus. If so, His salvation became yours that day, and is still yours today, and will be yours forever. Can you say Halleluya with me? If you have not yet received Jesus, today is a wonderful day to do so. If you want to receive Him today, just stay after class. When the others leave, come sit here (teacher, show the children where). I will come and help you receive Jesus so you can have salvation, too.

Lesson 2--The unusual occurrences while Jesus was on the cross

Lesson Aim: At the end of this lesson, my students will understand that the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross was unique, and that as He died, God gave many signs to draw our attention to this. Therefore we will gladly receive what He has done for our salvation.

Scripture for this Lesson:

Matthew 27:35-54; Mark 15:22-39; Luke 23:32-47; John 19:16-37

Lesson Aim: At the end of this lesson, students will understand that the unusual occurrences that happened while Jesus was on the cross show that His sacrifice was unique, fulfilled Scripture, & God accepted it in full payment for our sins. Therefore, they will accept His sacrifice with all their hearts and share this Good News with others.

Checking on the Application given on the first lesson(s):

Last week we asked you to think of how you could help others. We asked you to look to God to show you how to show them His love. Who tried to do that this last week and would like to tell us what happened?

Seven main points of the Bible lesson:

1. The soldiers, ignorant of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, divide his garments in fulfillment of prophecy (Psalm 22:18).

1A. Read:

<p>Matthew 27: 35 Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: <i>“They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.”</i></p>	<p>Mark 15: 24 And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.</p>	<p>Luke 23: 34b And they divided His garments and cast lots.</p>	<p>John 19:23-24 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: <i>“They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.”</i> Therefore the soldiers did these things.</p>
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Ask questions like these—

Primary Level:

- At what time of day did Jesus' crucifixion begin? (The third hour. The Jews started counting the hours of the day at 6 a.m., so this would have been about 9 am.)
- When Jesus was crucified, what did the soldiers do with His clothing? (Divided it among them, casting lots for it. Casting lots was some way of deciding who would receive each garment.)
- Why did they do this? (In fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 22:18, which had been written about a thousand years before.)
- How many groups of clothing were there? (Four parts, plus the tunic, making five parts.)
- What is a tunic? (A simple, long shirt, worn as an outer garment.)

Secondary Level:

- Different cultures have different ways of casting lots, and we don't know exactly what method was used by the soldiers to divide Jesus' clothing. What methods are common in your culture?
- What was the motive of the soldiers in casting lots for Jesus' clothing? Do you think they were trying to fulfill prophecy? (The soldiers were doing it as a part of their mocking Jesus. It was a way of saying they had complete control of Him and He was powerless to control even His clothing. They were not aware that a thousand years before, Biblical prophecy had predicted they would do this. This shows that really, God was in control, even when they were pretending they were.)

Acting out what happened:

Let the children divide into several groups. Within each group, they act out the dividing of Jesus' garments.

Singing and dancing what happened:

The soldiers mocked Him
 Casting lots for His clothes
 They didn't know that long ago
 God had said it would happen that way.

2. The soldiers put up a sign mocking Jesus saying, "King of the Jews".

2A. Read:

<p><i>Matthew 27:36</i> Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.</p>	<p>Mark 15:26 And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS.</p>	<p>Luke 23:38 And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Now Pilate wrote a title and put <i>it</i> on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.</p>	<p>John 19: 19-22 Now Pilate wrote a title and put <i>it</i> on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, <i>and</i> Latin. Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, “I am the King of the Jews.””” Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”</p>
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Ask questions like these—

Primary Level:

- What did the soldiers put on the cross over Jesus’ head? (A sign with the written accusation, This is Jesus, King of the Jews.)
- Who had really written the sign? (Pilate)
- In what three languages was it written? (Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, all common languages spoken in the area.)
- What objection did the chief priests bring about the sign? (They wanted the sign to say “He said he was King of the Jews,” rather than saying that He was King of the Jews.)
- What was Pilate’s response to their objection? (What I have written, I have written.)

Secondary Level:

- How was this sign just one more way of mocking Jesus? (A king would have power and would not be on the cross, at least the kings with whom they were familiar.)

Acting out what happened:

Let one child stand with arms out as if on the cross. Another child pretends to be Pilate, and writes a sign saying, "King of the Jews." He gives it to a small group of children pretending to be Roman soldiers. They pretend to nail it on the cross above Jesus. Another small group of children pretend to be priests. They go to Pilate, complaining that it should say, "He said He was King of the Jews." Pilate shakes his head "no" and says, "What I have written, I have written."

Singing & dancing what happened:

King of the Jews

The sign on the cross said

Pilate wouldn't change it

King of the Jews

3. From noon to 3 p.m., a sudden darkness came over all the land.

3A. Read:

Matthew 27:45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.	Mark 15:33 Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.	Luke 23:44-45a Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened,
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Ask questions like these—

Primary Level:

- What unusual thing happened from the sixth to the ninth hour? (Darkness was over all the land.)
- What time of day was that? (12 noon to 3 p.m.)
- Is that a time of day you would expect to see darkness? Why not? (It is the time when the sun is overhead and brightest.)

Secondary Level:

- What effect do you think this had on the people who were watching? (It surprised them and got their attention. They may have been afraid. God was showing them that something important and very unusual was happening.)

Acting out what happened:

Let all the children pretend they are watching Jesus' crucifixion. Suddenly, you say, "Darkness!" All the children close their eyes and act afraid because of the sudden darkness.

Singing & dancing what happened:

When Jesus was dying on the cross,
It was noontime, sun over head,
Suddenly there was darkness,
Oh, what is going on?

4. The veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom.

4A. Read:

Matthew 27: 51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom;	Mark 15:38 Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.
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Ask questions like these—

Primary Level:

- During that time of darkness mid-day, what was torn in two? (The veil of the temple)
- The veil of the temple kept everyone but the high priest from going into the holiest place, the place where God met His people. When it was torn in two, what did that allow? (It allowed people to go in.)
- Why do you think people might like to go in? (To meet with God, to be in the presence of God)
- Where did the tearing begin? (At the top. It tore from top to bottom. This was important, because the top was higher than anyone could reach. It shows that no person did the tearing. It was God himself who did it.)

Secondary Level:

- Do you know of any other Bible verses that show that in Christ, we have full access to God? (There are many. Some important ones are Romans 5:2, Ephesians 2:18, and Ephesians 3:12. Have students read these and tell what they mean.)
- What are some things people do to try to reach God because they don't understand that in Christ they have full access to Him? (Students may name many practices like praying to or through other intermediaries, seeking a priest, trying to amass good works, or fearing to come to God at all.)
- What does having full access to God mean to you & how do you use this privilege? (Hopefully they feel comfortable to come to God with any burden that is on their heart.)

Acting out what happened:

Let six students act out this narrative. One will be Jesus, standing with arms outstretched as if on the cross. A second will be the sun. That student will have two circles, one bright yellow, and the other black. (You could color two sides of the same circle.) He stands beside Jesus, first holding the bright yellow card, and then showing the black one, to show that the sun was darkened. The third student stands on a table and pretends to rip a cloth from top to bottom. Three others will go in to the opened temple. The remaining students count the timing.

The skit begins with Jesus groaning on the cross and the yellow “sun” circle showing. The students say together, 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 12 noon. When they say 12 noon, the student with the yellow circle suddenly changes it to black. Then a student gets on the table and pretends to tear the curtain of the temple in two from top to bottom. Three other students come and act amazed that now they can go into the temple, into God’s presence. They go in and begin to pray, thrilled with the glory of God.

Singing & dancing what happened:

God tore the veil in two!
He wants to let us in!
He wants to fellowship with us,
'Cause Jesus took our sin.

5. At the same time that the veil was torn, there was also a great earthquake.

5A. Read:

Matthew 27:51b-53
and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,
and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;
and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Ask questions like these—

Primary Level:

- At the same time the veil was torn, what other unusual events also happened? (There was an earthquake. The ground shook and some rocks split in two. Some graves were opened, and some believers who had died were brought to life again.)
- Where did those go who came to life again? (They went into the holy city [Jerusalem] and appeared to many.)

Secondary Level:

- What did these mean? (At the very least, we can say that God wanted to get everyone’s attention because something momentous was happening.)
- Do you remember the names Jesus called Himself? Did any of them have anything about death in it? (No, He called Himself the Life [John 14:6].)

Acting out what happened:

All the children together act out an earthquake. You the teacher throw some sock rocks on the floor to see if they will break. Choose two students to pretend they are dead and buried. When the earthquake takes place, their graves are opened. They get up, go around and show themselves to the other students.

Singing & dancing what happened:

God shook the earth when Jesus died. (Make shaking motions.)

Nothing like this ever happened before.

Look! My Son died for you!

6. 6. The Roman soldiers, not knowing the prophecies of Scripture, pierced His side, but did not break His legs after their usual custom. This fulfilled Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12, Psalm 34:20, and Zechariah 12:10.

6A. Read:

John 19: 31-34 Therefore, because it was the Preparation *Day*, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away.

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him.

But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.

For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, "*Not one of His bones shall be broken.*"

And again another Scripture says, "*They shall look on Him whom they pierced.*"

Ask questions like these—

Primary Level:

- Why did the soldiers break the legs of those being crucified? (To speed their death, because they could still be on the cross on the Jewish sabbath [Saturday]. This would have caused problems with the Jews.)
- Who asked for their legs to be broken? (The Jews. They were concerned about their Sabbath laws.)
- To whom did they make this request that the legs be broken? (To Pilate.)
- Whose legs were broken? (The other two men, the thieves, who were being crucified with Jesus)
- Why did they not break Jesus' legs? (They saw He was already dead.)

- What did one of the soldiers do instead? (Pierced Jesus' side with a sword.)
- What happened then? (Blood and water came out. This proved that Jesus was already dead.)
- How do we know this account of Jesus' crucifixion is what really happened? (It was written by an eyewitness—someone who was personally there and saw it all.)
- Nobody was trying to fulfill Scripture, yet two prophecies of Scriptures were fulfilled in this one act. What were they? (That none of His bones would be broken, and that He would be pierced.)

Secondary Level:

- Some of the Jewish leaders would have known about these prophecies. The reason they said they wanted the soldiers to break their legs was so that the bodies would not be on the cross during the Sabbath? Do you think they might also have been trying to keep prophecy from being fulfilled? If so, why would that be important? (Jesus could not have been the Promised Messiah unless He fulfilled all the Scriptures concerning the Messiah.)
- Is there anything human beings can do to keep the prophecies of Scripture from being fulfilled? See John 10:35b "The Scripture cannot be broken." (Jesus said that the Scripture cannot be broken, that is, it must all be fulfilled.)

Acting out what happened:

Let the children act out this section of the story. One student will take the part of Jesus, two the other men who were crucified with Jesus, one will take the part of Pilate, and the others will take the part of the Roman soldiers.

Singing & dancing what happened:

The soldiers went to break His bones
 But they could not do it.
 Because the Scripture said so long ago
 His bones would not be broken.

Ohh!!

A soldier went to pierce His side
 And blood and water ran out.
 Because the Scripture said so long ago
 The Messiah would be pierced.

7. 7. The soldier in charge of guarding him, and those with him, recognized that Jesus was the Son of God.

7A. Read:

Matthew 27: 54 So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the	Mark 15: 39 So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and
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earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"	breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!"
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Ask questions like these—

Primary Level:

- What was the reaction of the centurion (the head of the Roman soldiers) and others around him when they saw all the things we have learned about? (Truly, He was the Son of God.)
- How did they feel? (They feared greatly.)

Secondary Level:

- Try to put yourself in the place of that Roman soldier. What would you be thinking and feeling? (Maybe something like, Oh, no! We just killed the Son of God. Maybe you would be fearing that God might punish you, strike you dead, etc.)
- We don't know how the Roman soldier reacted when he learned later that Jesus had risen from the dead. We don't know whether he repented and became a follower of Jesus. It is possible, for he had come to understand the truth of Who Jesus is. Is it possible to know facts about who Jesus is and still not to follow Him? (Yes, there's a big difference between knowing facts about Jesus and knowing Him personally, following Him in your life. Which best describes you?)

Acting out what happened:

Let one child represent Jesus, holding out his arms as if on the cross. The others can all act the part of the Roman centurion and those with him, saying in amazement and great sorrow, "Truly this was the Son of God."

Singing & dancing what happened:

Sing with in sorrow, like a lament:

Truly He was the Son of God,
We made a big mistake.
Because truly He was the Son of God.

Then with great joy:

Truly He was the Son of God
He gave His life so we might live
Truly He was the Son of God.

Application for the Saved Student:

When Jesus was dying on the cross, God sent many special signs to get our attention. He didn't want anyone to miss the importance of what was happening. Although many sacrifices had been made before in the world, the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins was the One Big, Final Sacrifice. It was the one God had been waiting for, because it took away all our sins. This week, would you try telling your friends and family about the special signs God sent when Jesus died for our sins? They need to know how important it was, too.

Invitation for the Unsaved Student:

God sent all those signs so that no one would miss understanding how important Jesus' sacrifice was. It is so important that we will be saved or lost forever depending on our response. If you have not yet received Jesus as your Savior, would you stay after Sunday school and sit here (teacher, show where) so that I can pray with you? How wonderful it would be if you would come into God's family today!