

JESUS HAS RISEN

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

Introduction: Jesus' actions through His trial, crucifixion, and resurrection taught that He is the Son of God. Those who witnessed the resurrected Jesus and the empty tomb responded in several ways. Some responded with worship. Others chose to walk away and reject the truth of Christ. We are faced with the same question today. How we respond has immediate and eternal consequences.

1. Worshipping Christ and sharing His truth reflect a heart of humility and faith (Matthew 28:1-10).

Description: The women did not come to the tomb expecting to see an angel, much less an empty tomb. Nevertheless, when the angel instructed the women to tell the disciples that Jesus had been raised from the dead as He had promised, they quickly obeyed and left (vv. 1-8). When the women met the risen Jesus Himself, they immediately fell at His feet (vv. 9-10). This act signaled their humility before Him and was an act of worship. They believed the truth of Christ—what they had heard Him teach and the identity He claimed as the Son of God. They worshipped Him for the Savior and King that He was. They had encountered the risen Lord; they genuinely believed; and they joyfully shared the news of Jesus' resurrection as they were instructed to do.

Illustration: Much research has been conducted in the accuracy of eye-witness accounts, especially when these accounts become part of court litigation. Studies have found that eye-witness accounts are inaccurate 35-60% of the time; one study found that eye-witness accounts are inaccurate 90% of the time (<https://wrongfulconvictionsblog.org/2012/04/11/eyewitness-identification-how-reliable-is-it/>).

Application: The two groups of people explained what they saw at the tomb very differently based on their understanding of who Jesus was, their interpretation of the visual clues, and their life experiences. We all have to interpret the empty tomb based on our understanding of who Jesus is. The way that we view Christ makes all the difference in the world in how we live out our faith.

2. Refusing to consider the truth of Christ reflects a heart of prideful control (Matthew 28:11-14).

Description: The chief priests and elders posted the guards at Jesus' tomb for the purpose of preventing His body from being stolen so that His disciples couldn't make up a story about a resurrection. After witnessing the empty tomb, the guards went to the religious leaders to tell them what they had seen (v. 11). To protect their own influence with the Jewish people, the religious leaders chose to ignore the truth of Jesus' resurrection and responded by paying off the guards to keep quiet on what they had seen (v. 12). The guards were instructed to tell people that Jesus' body had been stolen by the disciples (v. 13), and were promised protection from punishment if the governor found out that Jesus' body was missing (v. 14). To admit that He really was the Son of God would have required that the religious leaders to relinquish control and confess to their failures. Instead, they refused to consider that they were wrong about Jesus and themselves.

Illustration: “The earth is flat.” “The earth is the center of the solar system.” These are two lies that were vehemently argued in the past. Based on self-centered views and poor interpretations of the Bible, even religious leaders refused to give up their control over science and people to rightly investigate alternate findings. Now, we know the truth, and the pride and control of leaders in centuries past is highly evident.

Application: We often paint a picture of religious leaders in Jesus’ time as evil, morally reprehensible men. And, well, they did a lot of things that were not good. But, these were men who tried to live impeccable lives. They tried to follow the Law exactly. They tried to work so hard for their salvation that when salvation came to them in Jesus, they refused to see it. There are many atheists who refuse to consider that Jesus is real and that His salvation is real. But there are a lot of “spiritual” people who also refuse to consider that Jesus is the only way to God and that they cannot work hard enough to earn salvation. When we think this way, our prideful nature is trying to shape our own version of God and salvation, placing ourselves in control instead of humbly admitting that we can neither save ourselves nor be God.

3. Recognizing the truth of Christ without life change reflects a heart of indifference (Matthew 28:15).

Description: The guards saw what happened at the tomb. They saw the angel and were so frightened that they couldn’t move. They saw that when the stone was rolled away, Jesus was not there. He was alive! They recognized the truth so well that they even went and told the religious leaders what had happened. They experienced the truth and knew it, but their lives were not changed. Instead of clinging to the truth, they were willing to be paid off to lie (v. 15). They sacrificed the truth for their own selfish purposes. Their minds knew the truth, but their hearts were indifferent to it.

Illustration: Suppose you knew what the cure for cancer is. You tell some important research centers, and they pay you to keep quiet about it. What would that say about your desire to see people healed of cancer? If you could exchange money for the lives of many people, your actions would reflect the fact that you didn’t care too much about curing cancer or the people who are fighting it every day.

Application: We are all in danger of knowing the right things and even saying the right things while having a heart that is indifferent to Christ. Scripture is clear that even the demons believe in Christ, but they are not His followers. If we truly believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and that He is the only way to salvation, then our hearts and our actions will reflect that belief. A changed heart is always accompanied by a changed life. We will always make mistakes and will always battle sin, but a life that follows Christ will show a consistent desire to become more like Him.

Conclusion: Jesus was raised from the dead. That truth could not and cannot be denied. Yet, because Jesus is God and Savior, all people have to make a choice of how to respond to His death and resurrection. And their responses will consequently reveal their hearts.