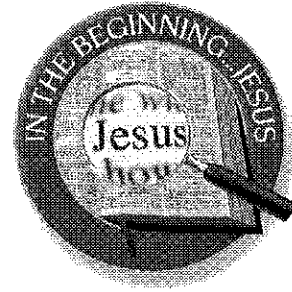


In the Beginning...Jesus



Lesson 1 What Happened Here?

Theme:

- The Bible is one, complete, true story that reveals to us the solution to the greatest mystery of all—the death of Jesus on the cross.

Scripture:

Mark 14:43-44; Matthew 26:71b-72; 27:1-2, 30-31;
John 19:15b-16, 25, 36; Luke 23:49; Romans 16:25b-26a

Memory Verse:

In the coming lessons, this space will include references for Scripture memory. Students will memorize in small increments: Isaiah 53:3-12 in Lessons 2-20; and John 1:1-18 in Lessons 21-39.

Visuals for Lesson:

- Bible
- A small tray, glass of milk (half full), one or two cookies, baseball, and a cloth—place the cookies and the glass of milk on the tray. Tip the glass of milk to spill it on the tray. Place the tray on a table in the front of the room. Place the baseball on the table next to the tray. Cover the tray and the ball with the cloth, being careful that the cloth doesn't absorb the milk.
- Resource Packet:
 - CLUES (pieces A-B)—Carefully cut along the gray dashed lines of piece A. Place piece A on top of piece B. Glue or tape along edges.
 - WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? WHO? WHY?
 - Five CLUE SIGNS (MR. & MRS. HOWARD, ERIC, BROKEN WINDOW, RAKE, BASEBALL BAT)—Tape the signs underneath five of the chairs that the students will use during the beginning of the class.
 - *In the Beginning...Jesus* Poster—On the bottom of the poster lightly tape paper over the words “has now been revealed!”
 - Verse Cards 1-7.

Visual for Application (Small Group Leaders):

- A puzzle (200 or more pieces)—Remove the pieces from the box and place them in a bag. Keep the box cover with the picture available but hidden from the children.

Lesson

Draw attention to the cloth on the table. Ask the children if they know what's under the cloth. Remove the cloth and **display** the tray with the ball and spilt milk. Ask the children, "*What do you think happened here?*" Tell the children that you have a mystery story to share with them today related to the ball and the spilt milk.

Ask: *What exactly is a mystery?* [Allow the children to respond.]

Point out that a mystery is something that is not fully known—there are unanswered questions. Questions such as: What happened? Where did it happen? When did it happen? Who did it? And why? **Display** the **WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? WHO? WHY?** visual.

Ask children if there is a way they could solve the mystery of the split milk and the ball. [Allow a few, brief responses.] **Display** the **CLUES** visual. Ask the children if they know what "clues" are. Explain that clues are hints that help us discover the answers to the what, where, when, who, and why questions of a mystery. For example, the ball is a clue. What might the ball hint at? Next, tell the children that hidden under five chairs are clues to the mystery of the spilt milk. Instruct the children to quickly find these clues and **display** them to the class (**MR. & MRS. HOWARD, ERIC, BROKEN WINDOW, RAKE, and BASEBALL BAT**).

*Do these clues help you to solve the mystery? Do they hint at answers to these questions? (Display the **WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? WHO? WHY?** visual again.) What do you think happened and who do you think did it?* [Allow one or two children to give brief responses.]

I'll read the story and see if your solution to the mystery is correct.

Quickly read *The Mystery of the Wayward Ball*:

It was a lazy fall day. Mr. Howard was in his house sitting down in his favorite chair to have some cookies and milk. Mrs. Howard was out in the yard raking the leaves. Eric, the 10-year-old boy who lives next door to the Howards, walked by Mrs. Howard on his way to the park to play baseball. Mrs. Howard called out, "Eric, I found something that you lost last week in my yard. Let me have Mr. Howard get it for you."

Mrs. Howard went over to the window and saw that Mr. Howard was sound asleep in his chair. She tapped on the window to get his attention, but he didn't hear her. She tapped harder, but still Mr. Howard slept. Frustrated, she took the handle of the rake and pounded on the window. CRASH! went the window. Startled by the noise of the breaking glass, Mr. Howard jumped up, knocked over his milk, and ran to the window to see

what had happened. There he saw his wife, still holding the rake. As if nothing had happened, she simply asked, "Could you give me Eric's ball? It's on the table by your milk."

Ask the children if they were surprised by the solution to the mystery. Were their conclusions correct? Why not? Point out that sometimes mysteries have surprise endings—with a solution we didn't expect. We may have thought we had made sense of the clues, but when we read the whole story, we found that we hadn't and therefore, didn't come up with the right solution.

*I have another mystery to share with you today. It is not a made-up mystery like the one I just read. It was a real-life mystery that happened a long time ago. Here is a drawing of this mystery. (**Display** the **In the Beginning...Jesus** poster.)*

What do you think is happening in this picture? [Jesus is dying on a cross.]

Point out that in the Bible Jesus' death on the cross is sometimes referred to as a mystery to the people who saw it happen (**Romans 16:25**).

*Why would the death of Jesus be called a mystery? Because the people who saw it happen couldn't answer some of these questions. (**Display** the **WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? WHO? WHY?** visual.)*

Tell the children that the Bible tells us about two men who were walking together along a road near Jerusalem soon after Jesus had died on a cross (**Luke 24:13-21**). They were confused. Jesus' death on the cross didn't seem to make sense:

*They knew **what** had happened: Jesus had died on a cross.
They knew **where** it had happened: Just outside the city of Jerusalem.
They even knew **when** it had happened: During the Jewish Passover.
But they didn't understand **why** it had happened or exactly **who** did it.
And with those important questions unanswered, Jesus' death remained a mystery to them.*

But there were clues that might have helped them answer the who and why questions. Some of these clues—the people who were involved in the mystery—are found on our poster. Who were these people? I'll read about the first one.

Read **Mark 14:43-44**:

And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign,

saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize Him and lead Him away under guard."

Point to the picture of Judas on the poster (the man holding the gold coins) and comment: *Before Jesus died on the cross, one of His disciples betrayed Him. This led to Jesus' arrest and then His death. Was Judas the "who" of the "who killed Jesus?" Judas was paid for doing this. Does this answer the "why"? Did Judas do it because he wanted money?*

Explain that there are more clues to be found on the poster. Quickly **distribute** the **Verse Cards** to children in the class. Have them read their passage and then *quickly* ask the questions as follows. [Note: In the interest of time, ask these questions in a rhetorical way without allowing discussion. Instruct the children to think about the questions, but not answer them out loud. Also, to save time, you may want to divide the verses between children and adults.]

Verse Card #1: **Matthew 26:71b-72**—***"This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again [Peter] denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man."***

Point to Peter on the poster (the man crying, with a rooster near his shoulder) and comment: *Peter denied knowing Jesus. He abandoned Jesus after Jesus had been arrested. Was it Peter's fault that Jesus was killed? Did Jesus die because Peter was afraid?*

Verse Card #2: **Matthew 27:1-2a**—***When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death. And they bound Him and led Him away.***

Point to the priests and elders on the poster (the three angry men with raised arms) and ask: *The Jewish leaders hated Jesus and wanted Him dead. Did they kill Jesus because they hated Him?*

Verse Card #3: **John 19:14b-15a**—***[Pilate] said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!"***

Point to the Jewish crowd on the poster (the three angry people in the lower right-hand corner) and ask: *The Jewish crowd was crying out for Jesus to be crucified. Did they kill Jesus because they were angry?*

Verse Card #4: **John 19:15b-16**—***Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." So [Pilate] delivered Him over to them to be crucified.***

Point to Pilate on the poster (the man with the blue robe in the upper left-

hand corner) and ask: *Pilate was the Roman governor. He was the one who gave the order for Jesus to be killed. Is he the one who killed Jesus because he didn't want to be bothered by the Jews?*

Verse Card #5: **Matthew 27:30-31**—*[The soldiers] spit on Him and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the robe and put His own clothes on Him and led Him away to crucify Him.*

Point to the Roman soldiers on the poster (the two men with the spears) and ask: *It was the Roman soldiers who mocked Jesus and took Him and nailed Him to the cross. Did they kill Jesus because they were following orders?*

Verse Card #6: **Luke 23:49**—*And all [Jesus'] acquaintances and the women who had followed Him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.*

Point to the distant crowd on the poster (in the upper right-hand corner) and ask: *These were friends of Jesus, why didn't they help? Are they to blame for Jesus' death because they wouldn't come to help Him?*

Verse Card #7: **John 19:25**—*But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother and His mother's sister.*

Point to the two women holding each other and crying and comment: *Jesus' own mother and aunt were there watching Him slowly die on the cross. Couldn't they have tried to do something? Is it their fault that Jesus died because they were helpless to save Him?*

Conclude by asking: *So, do you think that these clues helped the two men walking along the road answer the who and why questions? No. It was all very confusing to them. It was still a mystery—a mystery they couldn't solve, even with these clues.*

Display the **CLUES** visual again. This time, have a child come up front to examine the visual. Does he notice a "window" that can be opened on the visual? Point out that if he opens the window, he will find a clue to the mystery that the two men didn't yet have, but that we now have:

***For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled.
(John 19:36a)***

Explain that the words "*these things*" refer to the events that led to Jesus' death on the cross. All of the things that happened took place so that the Scripture—the Bible—would be fulfilled and completed. What does that mean?

It means that Jesus' death was carefully planned by someone (Who?) for some special reason (Why?). It also means that the Scripture—the Bible—has been written like a mystery story where these clues can be found.

Display a Bible. *The Bible is filled with many more clues than the ones found on our poster.*

Explain that the two men walking down the road had the Scriptures. They had read the clues. Why then was Jesus' death still a mystery to them? Why were they still confused about why it happened and who did it?

Read the words on the top of the poster: *"The mystery that was kept secret for long ages..."*

Comment: *Someone had kept this mystery a secret for a long time...just as a mystery writer might make you read many pages before you can find out "Who done it? And why?"*

Ask: *Who kept this mystery a secret and why? Is this mystery still a secret? Can we figure out who killed Jesus and why? Or are we like those two men long ago who couldn't figure it out?*

Remove the paper covering the words on the bottom of the poster to reveal the words: *"has now been revealed!"*

Explain that these words complete the sentence that was started at the top of the poster. What do these words from the Bible tell us? [The mystery has been revealed, or solved.] How can that be?

Point out that we have an advantage over the two men who were walking along the road. We have the WHOLE story of the mystery, beginning to end. Ask the children where they could find the whole story. [In the Bible—both Old and New Testaments.] The two men along the road only had a part of the story—the Old Testament. **Display** a Bible and quickly flip through the pages from beginning to end.

Illustration: Point to the ball and the spilt milk again.

Suppose your parents were to come into our class right now and look at the ball and spilt milk and saw the five clues I gave you. Would they be able to solve the mystery? But would you be able to tell them what really happened? Why? [Because you heard the whole story, from beginning to end.]

Explain that the Bible is a true-life story written by God Himself that tells us about the greatest mystery of all: Jesus' death on the cross. The Bible gives the WHOLE story as

to what, where, when, who, and why it happened. Jesus' death on the cross is not a mystery anymore—it has been solved. But we need to understand what the clues are and how they point to the correct solution.

Tell the children that in the coming weeks they will be acting as *detectives*—people who carefully look for clues and use them to solve mysteries. They will be examining the Bible, looking for the important clues that God gave us in order to understand the greatest mystery of all—Jesus' death on the cross.

Application

- **WORKBOOK**—Have the children turn to Lesson 1 in their workbooks. Review the scene of the crucifixion of Jesus, including the various people involved. Have the children look at the questions at the bottom of the workbook page. Read the questions and have the children discuss their answers. Have them write their OWN answers to the who and why questions. [Note: At this point, do not provide the right answers or correct wrong answers to these questions. The curriculum will lead the children through the Bible to answer these questions correctly and more fully by Lesson 38.]
- **Distribute** several puzzle pieces among the children. Ask the children if they are able to tell you what the whole puzzle looks like. Why not? Give them several more pieces. Does this help? Point out that even though they have been given many “clues” to the puzzle, without seeing the whole picture it is hard to understand how each individual piece fits together. The whole picture is a mystery. Point out that this was the way it probably was for the two men walking along the road and the other Jewish people who lived at the time of Jesus' death. They had the Old Testament—filled with many clues—but they could not understand how the clues all fit together because they had not yet seen the whole picture. Read and discuss **Romans 16:25b-26a** and compare it with **Colossians 1:26**.
- **Note:** This illustration could be continued throughout the next 37 lessons. Each week give the children a few more puzzle pieces. They will progressively gain a better picture of what the completed puzzle might look like. Wait until Lesson 38 or 39 to give them all the pieces and also show them the box cover, so they see how the finished picture really looks and how each piece of the puzzle fits together perfectly to complete the picture.
- Have the children turn to **1 Corinthians 2:8**. Explain that this verse also refers to what happened to Jesus on the cross. Ask the children what they think the verse might mean. Next, read verses 6-9. Do these verses help

us understand verse 8? How? What had God been preparing to do for His people? How has this been revealed?

- ❑ Ask the children about their reactions when they look at a picture depicting Jesus on the cross. What kinds of things do they think about? How do they feel? Sad? Glad? Thankful? All of these things? Or, none of them? If none, why? Read and discuss **1 Corinthians 1:18**.
- ❑ How is the Bible different from any other kind of book or mystery story? [Examples: The Bible was written by God (**2 Peter 1:21**). God's words are always true (**Psalms 119:160a**). The Bible was written so that we might believe in Jesus (**John 20:31**).]
- ❑ Use a map (provided in the back of most Bibles) showing the city of Jerusalem. Emphasize that this is a REAL place—the story of Jesus' death on the cross was a REAL event that happened in a known place at a very specific time in history, namely, the Jewish Passover (a certain time of year, occurring during our spring time, during which the Jewish people celebrated God's delivering them from slavery in Egypt long ago).

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