

Our **GUIDE**

for little ones

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Writer: Don Doezema Artist: Connie Meyer
Designers: Judi Doezema & Brenda Brands

IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lesson 53

The Signs of Jesus' Death

Matthew 27:51-53;

Hebrews 9:1-14 & 10:1-22

One Old Testament story that you all remember is the story of Adam and Eve. You remember that they lived in an earthly Paradise, a perfect world. Mosquitoes didn't bite them. Birds were not afraid of them. They didn't have to pull weeds out of their garden. And Adam and Eve themselves were perfect. God created them that way. They were sinless. Not one evil thought passed through their minds. And because they were holy, as God is holy, they could walk and talk with Him, in the cool of the day, in the beautiful Garden of Eden.



Then one day they were tempted by the devil. And they listened to him.

They sinned. They did what God had told them not to do.

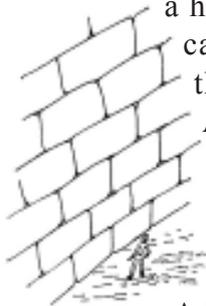
They were then put out of the Garden of Eden — because they were *sinner*s. No longer could they have fellowship with the holy *God* — because they were no longer a holy *people*. They were barred from the garden — kept back by cherubim (angels) and by a flaming sword.

Try hard to understand that. By their rebellion against God, they became *His enemies* and *Satan's friends*. They deserved to be cast out of the Garden of Eden. They deserved to be kept back

Note to Parents: These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students — grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read *to* them, not *by* them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the “off” season.

from the presence of God — forever. And, because *they* were sinners, all of their *children*, you and me too, would be sinners just like them. We would all deserve only to be kept away from God.

What is it, then, that keeps us separate from God? It's sin! Think of it this way — between us and God, there is a huge wall. It's so high that we can't get over it. It's so wide that we can't get around it.



And that wall is *sin* — *Adam's* sin, and *our* sin. As long as that wall remains — as long as *sin* remains — we cannot enjoy the presence of God.

Adam and Eve *knew* that. That's why they *hid* from God in the garden.

But God in His mercy *found* them. And He promised them a *Savior*. He gave them, too, a picture of how that high, wide wall would be broken down, how their *sin* would be *removed*. He



made clothes for them — out of animal skins. That's right, He took animals, animals that were not guilty of Adam's sin, and He *killed them*. Their blood was *shed* — for a covering for Adam and Eve. Do you see the *picture*? Adam and Eve understood a little bit of it. They knew that the punishment for sin is *death* — *eternal death*. That's what *they* deserved. But, somehow, those *animals* were *taking their place*. The animals died *instead of them*. But ... but ... animals can't really *die for sin*, can they? No, they can't.

Adam and Eve understood that too. They knew that God had given them only a *picture of salvation*. He promised them a *Savior* — who would save them, somehow, *through the shedding of innocent blood*. It was a mystery still. But they believed the promise of God.

Think now of the people of Israel, many many years later, in the land of Canaan. Solomon is their king. He builds a beautiful temple, the temple of *God*, where God *dwells with His people*.

But how can that be? How can God *dwell with His people*, if their sins have not yet been forgiven — if that high, wide wall is still there?

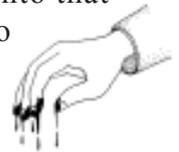
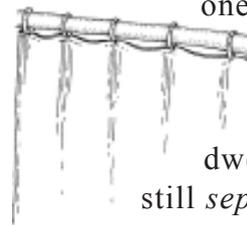
Well, let's take a look inside the temple. What do we see? In front of the place where God dwelt, we see ... a *wall*.

No, not a *brick wall*, or even a *wooden one*. But a high and wide, thick and heavy, *veil*.

Behind the veil is the ark of God, where God dwells. God, you see, is still *separate from sinners*. No one may go behind that veil.

No one, that is, except the high priest. Once a year he may go into that room, the Most Holy Place — to sprinkle *blood*, the blood of an *animal*, on the ark. God's people are still *shut out* from His presence. But there is hope — hope of *salvation*... because of the *shed blood*.

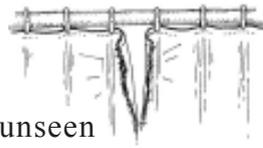
For 4,000 years the people of God waited for the coming of the Savior. At last He came. And ... He is *rejected* of



men. Yes, they nail Him to a cross. His blood ... is *shed*.

Do you see it? That was the promise, and the picture, that God gave already to Adam and Eve. A Savior. And shed blood. Jesus suffers the pains of hell — for His people. Their sins are *forgiven* — because the price has been paid ... in *full* — on the cross.

And then something amazing happened — in the *temple*. It was about 3:00 in the afternoon — the hour of prayer. So a priest must have been burning incense in the Holy Place. All is quiet there, as the priest goes about his business. But suddenly the silence is broken by a tearing, ripping sound. It was the *veil*. It was that high and wide, thick and heavy curtain that hung in front of the Most Holy Place, where *God* dwelt. Like the flaming sword that barred the entrance to the Garden of Eden, this veil had always kept men *away from God* — because He is holy, and they are *sinners*. Something is now happening to this veil. The priest must have watched in wide-eyed wonder. It was as if there were two unseen hands, ripping that thick veil apart, from the top to the bottom.



The way into the Most Holy Place, the way into the *presence of God* — was *thrown open!* But who had *done* that? There could be only one answer. *God* had done it. At the very moment that His Son cried with a loud voice, “It is finished!” ... and *died* ... God ripped the

veil. Why? Because *sin* was gone. The sins, that is, of *God’s people*. Jesus died for them. Think of that! Think of God’s promise to Adam and Eve. The promise of a Savior. The picture of salvation by the shedding of blood. How did God fulfill it? By sending His *own Son* — to *die* ... for *sinners*, like *you*, and *me*.

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The rending of the veil, when Jesus died, was an amazing sign of the power of the cross over sin. But that wasn’t the only sign at Jesus’ death. There were others — just as amazing. There was an earthquake. Try to imagine what that was like for the people at the cross. At the moment Jesus died, the ground under their feet *shook*.

Large rocks in the area *split apart*. And graves were opened.



That must have been scary — scary because the people there knew that it was *God* who sent these signs. It was as if God Himself was *speaking* at Calvary. But what was He *saying*? They didn’t know. Do you?

What was God saying when those stones rolled away from the openings to graves? He was saying this, that Jesus’ victory on the cross was not only a victory over *sin*, but also over *death*. Yes, Jesus had already defeated death. Tombs were opened up. And then, wonder of wonders, on Sunday morning (after Jesus Himself arose) *bodies* came out of those opened graves. *Resurrection* bodies. *Glorified* bodies. Bodies that had been

rotting in the graves came out ... *fit for heaven*. For a short time they appeared to many in the city, and then God brought them *to heaven*. They are there today, among the souls of millions of God's people who still wait for the great resurrection day, when their bodies, too, will be raised in glory.

Can you imagine all of that? Our sins are *forgiven*. We have the hope of *heaven* — soul and body. Why? Because Christ died and rose again, not just for *Himself* ... but for *us*. How do we know? The rent veil ... the open graves — they prove it.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. Why were Adam and Eve put out of the Garden of Eden? How were they kept from ever going back into it?
2. How did God make clothes for Adam and Eve to wear?
3. What was there in the temple that kept God's people away from God's presence?
4. What happened to the veil in the temple at the moment Jesus died?
5. Can you name two other things that happened when Jesus died?

No Bone Broken

Matthew 27:54; John 19:31-37

"He was despised, and we esteemed him not." That is, "He was despised, and we *did not want Him*."

Did you hear that? *We* did not want Him. *Nobody* does. That's what

Isaiah said. And that's what *Jesus* said too. "I am *not come*," said Jesus, "to call the *righteous*, but *sinners* to repentance."

Try as hard as you can to understand that. Jesus did not die to save those who already wanted Him. He died to save those who *didn't want Him*. He died to bring *sinners* to repentance. Sinners like the thief on the cross.

And sinners like (can you believe it?) the *centurion* at the cross. He was a *Gentile* soldier. He didn't know the Scriptures. He knew nothing



about Isaiah's prophecies. But he watched Jesus at His trial before Pilate. He heard the Jews accuse Him of claiming to be the Son of God. He listened to them mock Jesus on the cross. He heard Jesus speak from the cross. He pondered the fearful three hours of darkness, the earthquake, and the splitting of the rocks. And he said, "Truly this man was the *Son of God*."

Brought to repentance. A *Gentile* is saved. No longer just the Jews. Soon, out of every nation — Greek, Romans, Dutch, Americans. Yes, even you and me. The centurion pictured ... us.

What about the *Jews* at the cross? What did they think about the death of Jesus? They left Calvary ... and went back to their pious celebration of the *Passover Feast*.

The *real* Passover Lamb was hanging still on that middle cross. And the Jews go back to the Old Testament *picture*.

John did not. He stayed at the cross. Not yet did he understand that Jesus was *the* Passover Lamb. But he watched carefully — and he saw the *proof* of it. Let's try to see what he saw.

Way back in the days of Moses, God had told the people of Israel exactly how they must celebrate the Passover. The Passover lamb, God said, must be *killed*, its blood must be *shed*, but *not a bone of it may be broken*. The Passover lamb was a picture of the *Savior*. *He* would be killed, *His* blood would be shed, and not a bone of *His* body would be broken. That was the Old Testament picture.

But what do we see happening at the cross? It looks as if Jesus' bones are going to be *broken*!

That, at least, is what the *Jews* wanted. This was, you see, Friday afternoon. Saturday was the *Passover Sabbath* — one of the most sacred of all the days in the Jewish year. The chief priests didn't want such a day to be *spoiled* by having three crosses standing right by the gate of the city. So off they go to Pilate. And what do they ask? They ask that Pilate command the soldiers to break the legs of the men on the crosses, so that they will die sooner, so that those crosses can be taken down *today*.

Pilate agrees. The soldiers are commanded. And they proceed to *do* it.

John is watching. He watches the soldiers take their clubs and smash the legs of the first malefactor. He watches them do

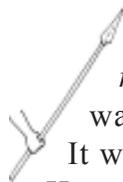


the same to the second malefactor. Their leg bones are *broken*.

Then the soldiers come to Jesus. John must have cringed. He expected them to smash Jesus' legs. Why, after all, would they *not* do it? They had been told what to do. And orders were orders.

But John wasn't remembering an Old Testament picture, and an Old Testament prophecy. One was this: "A bone of him shall not be broken." And the other was a mysterious prophecy, of Zechariah, about a *piercing of God*. Both are about the *Messiah*. If they are not fulfilled *here*, then Jesus is *not the Messiah*.

John watches. The soldiers look at Jesus. They see that He *seems* to be already dead. They decide *not* to break His legs. But what if He *isn't* dead? Just to make sure, one of the soldiers takes his spear ... and *pierces* Jesus' side.



John saw it all. Later on, he *marveled*. What the soldiers did was *unexpected*. It was *unplanned*. It was done almost *thoughtlessly*.

How clear it is that *God* rules — even in the actions of sinful men. How clear it is that Jesus is indeed *the* Passover Lamb, the promised Messiah. For in Him are fulfilled — perfectly — every detail of the pictures and prophecies that pointed to the Savior. Even to this — no bone broken.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. What did the centurion say about Jesus?
2. Why did the children of Israel

have to be careful when they killed lambs for the Passover?

3. What did the leaders of the Jews ask Pilate to do?

4. Why didn't the soldiers break Jesus' legs?

How Well Do You Understand?

1. Why were Adam and Eve able to walk and talk with God in the Garden of Eden?

2. God gave Adam and Eve a picture of how they would someday be saved from their sins. What was that picture?

3. Why did God command that a veil be hung in front of the Most Holy Place in the temple?

4. Why did God rend the veil of the temple when Jesus died?

5. What amazing sign at the moment of Jesus' death showed that He had already won the victory over death?

6. How is the centurion a picture of us?

7. Why did John *expect* that Jesus' bones were going to be broken?

8. Why was it important that they *not* be broken?

Memory Verse

Matthew 27:54 "Truly this was the Son of God."

