

April 16
Lesson 7

VICTORIOUS

LOVE

DEVOTIONAL READING: Luke 24:1-12

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: John 19:38-42; 20:1-10; 1 Peter 1:3-9

JOHN 20:1-10

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

1 PETER 1:3-9

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

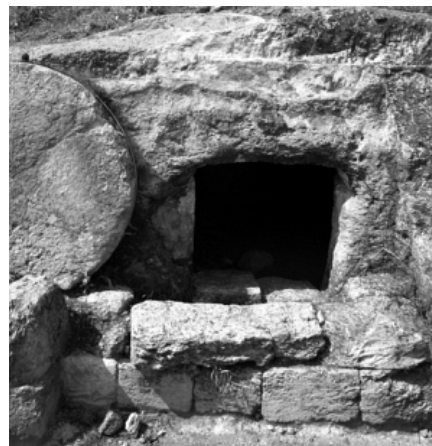


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KEY VERSE

The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.—John 20:8

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize what happened on the first day of the week after Jesus' crucifixion.
2. Describe why Jesus' resurrection is the victory of God's love over death.
3. Explain to a new Christian or an unbeliever the importance of Christ's resurrection.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. When Did the Victory Begin?
- B. Lesson Background

I. The Risen Christ ([John 20:1-10](#))

- A. Empty Tomb Discovered ([vv. 1, 2](#))
- B. Empty Tomb Confirmed ([vv. 3-7](#))
- C. Empty Tomb Considered ([vv. 8-10](#))

II. The Empowering Christ ([1 Peter 1:3-9](#))

- A. Rejoicing in Resurrection Life ([vv. 3-5](#))
The Only Threat
- B. Rejoicing in Fiery Trials ([vv. 6-9](#))
Refining Process and Result

Conclusion

- A. The Christ of the Empty Tomb
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

Introduction

A. When Did the Victory Begin?

If you listen to the postgame analysis of a sports event, you are likely to hear discussed, in one form or another, this question: What was the key to the winning side's victory? The key may have been one particular play that shifted momentum decisively, the play in question becoming a turning point.

The same question can be modified to inquire of the grand storyline of our world. The question in that case is this: What event is key to God's victory in and over the world? The Bible's answer to that question is the resurrection of Jesus. In that event, God turned the tide of history decisively toward his goals. Jesus' resurrection fulfilled promises of the past, addresses the needs of the present, and anchors hope for the eternal future.

We study two texts today in that regard. The first concerns eyewitnesses of Jesus' empty tomb as recorded in the Gospel of John. There Jesus' resurrection serves as the greatest of his "signs." These are the events that proved him to be the divine Son of God, the events that provide yet today the impulse for the faith in him that gives life ([John 20:30, 31](#)).

The second text is from 1 Peter. This book, actually a letter, was addressed to several churches in regions of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) that faced social pressure and persecution because of faith in Christ. To readers living in fear and uncertainty, this book served to remind them that Jesus' resurrection meant that they were participants in Christ's life, his sufferings, his resurrection, and the eternal victory.

B. Lesson Background

We can appreciate that message better when we understand the background to belief in the New Testament's presentation of resurrection. Although the Old Testament ascribes to God the power of life and death, it is remarkably quiet about what lies beyond the universal human experience of death. Faithful people in the Old Testament era expressed confidence that God was reliable always, even as his people faced death (examples: [Job 19:25](#); [Psalm 56:13](#)). Some of the prophets spoke briefly and mysteriously of God's raising the dead ([Isaiah 26:19](#); [Daniel 12:2](#)). But their messages focused mostly on the restoration of Israel after exile.

Belief that God would one day raise the dead became stronger among the Jews during the centuries between the testaments. As they faced generations of disappointment, hardship, and persecution, people of faith came to understand that God would surely be faithful to *all* his

people when he fulfills promises to remake the world. Those Jews reasoned that since many of God’s people will be dead when he fulfills those end-time promises, then surely he will raise the dead at that time. As a result, all God’s people—those who have already died and those still alive—will experience the fulfillment of God’s blessings together.

Jesus, the New Testament writers, and some of Jesus’ opponents affirmed belief that God will raise the dead (examples, respectively: [Luke 20:35](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#); [Acts 23:6-8](#)). But the New Testament describes something more radical yet: that God began to fulfill his end-time promises by raising the Messiah from the dead. No one anticipated this preparatory step ([Luke 24:25-27](#); etc.). Jesus’ resurrection means that God’s promised gifts of the end time—truth, peace, justice, and mercy—were and are becoming reality.

I. The Risen Christ

([JOHN 20:1-10](#))

A. Empty Tomb Discovered (vv. 1, 2)

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

Earlier in the text, readers are introduced to women who witness Jesus’ death ([John 19:25](#)). Three of these are named *Mary*, so it’s easy to get confused. That’s undoubtedly why John includes the designation *Magdalene* here. That is not her last name, as modern convention regarding surnames might tempt us to think. Rather, it indicates that she is from Magdala, a town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

HOW TO SAY IT

Magdalene *Mag-duh-leen* or *Mag-duh-lee-nee*.

Messiah *Meh-sigh-uh*.

In [Luke 8:2](#) “Mary (called Magdalene)” is identified as one from whom Jesus cast out “seven demons.” She and other women are coming to Jesus’ tomb at dawn to complete the preparation of his body for burial ([Luke 23:55-24:1, 10](#)). That effort had been cut short by the beginning of the Sabbath at sundown on the day of the crucifixion ([John 19:31](#)).

The tomb’s entrance had been sealed with a large, round, flat stone—very heavy and difficult to move. Mental alarm bells must go off for Mary Magdalene when she sees that this stone is now moved away from the tomb’s entrance. Clearly something unusual has happened.

^{2a} So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said,

Alarmed, Mary returns hurriedly to report her discovery to two of Jesus’ disciples. *Simon Peter* is often their spokesman, his name appearing first in all four listings of the Twelve in [Matthew 10:2-4](#); [Mark 3:16-19](#); [Luke 6:13-16](#); and [Acts 1:13](#).

References to this *other disciple* (though not always in those words) appear repeatedly in the latter part of this Gospel ([John 13:23](#); [18:15, 16](#); [19:26, 27](#)). Undoubtedly these refer to the author himself: John, whose name appears among the top four in the four listings above. Some see the phrase *the one Jesus loved* to indicate a close friendship between John and Jesus. Others believe that the phrase expresses the author’s awe that he is personally loved by God’s Son.

^{2b} “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

Mary reports what she has seen—or, rather, what she hasn’t: Jesus’ body. Grave robbery, common at the time, would be the first assumption. Regardless, Mary wants to retrieve the body of *the Lord* (compare [John 20:15](#)). That term reflects her deep devotion to him even after his death.

B. Empty Tomb Confirmed (vv. 3-7)

^{3, 4} So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

Peter and the other disciple react by rushing to *the tomb*. Given their continuing fear of later this day ([John 20:19](#)), they too have no expectation that an empty tomb means that Jesus has been raised to life.

The two men arrive at the tomb at different times, take different actions, and manifest different responses. The text supplies these details to challenge readers to move from the evidence of the story to faith in the one who is the subject of the story ([John 20:30, 31](#)).

^{5, 6} He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there,

The *he* of [verse 5](#) is John, the “other disciple” per above. Without entering the tomb, he can see the pieces of fabric that had wrapped Jesus’ body. These *strips of linen* must be those of Jesus, since the tomb has been otherwise unused (compare [Luke 23:50-54](#)).

Arriving after John, the characteristically bold (or rash) Peter steps past him and enters the tomb. Jesus’ body has not been stolen by grave

robbers, since thieves would not take the time to unwrap a body before making off with it. This is a mysterious matter indeed!

What Do You Think?

How do we know when a situation calls for the boldness of a Simon Peter rather than the caution of a John? How about the reverse?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."—Alexander Pope

"Sometimes the fool who rushes in gets the job done."—Al Bernstein

7. as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen.

Being closer to the scene than John, Peter sees the details noted here. Such details reinforce that we are reading the testimony of eyewitnesses. The tomb is undeniably empty, and not because of robbery, the story told by some of the opponents of Jesus ([Matthew 28:11-15](#)).

C. Empty Tomb Considered (vv. 8-10)

8. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

Now John (*the other disciple*) enters. What he sees prompts him to believe. The text does not mention what he believes, because that is clear from the context: he believes that Jesus has risen from the dead. This final and greatest of Jesus' signs is having its divinely intended effect.

What Do You Think?

How should those who are quicker to believe respond to those who are slower to do so?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

In attitudes

In words

In actions

Considering [John 1:47-49](#) in relation to [John 20:24-29](#)

9. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

Although John now believes that Jesus has risen *from the dead*, John does not yet understand why this has taken place. With time to reflect, however, Jesus' followers will conclude that his death and resurrection were God's intention all along and therefore anticipated in *Scripture*.

That conclusion is based not on a single proof text, but drawn from numerous Old Testament passages (see [Luke 24:27](#)). Perhaps clearest of these is [Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#), which depicts God's servant willingly giving his life for the guilty, yet being victoriously alive again.

10. Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

As Peter and John exit the tomb, we are left with a sense of expectancy. Indeed, the verse before us serves as a transition. That which follows narrates Jesus' subsequent appearance to Mary Magdalene ([John 20:11-18](#)) and then to the gathered disciples on three occasions ([20:19-23](#), [24-29](#); [21:1-23](#)).

These appearances confirm what John, the disciple with Peter, has come to believe: that Jesus is victoriously alive again, even though he had been killed. God's promises are being fulfilled. The era of God's salvation has begun.

What Do You Think?

Which details of John's resurrection account most strengthen your faith? Why?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Regarding your Christian service now

Regarding your expectation of being with Christ for eternity

II. The Empowering Christ

(1 [PETER 1:3-9](#))

A. Rejoicing in Resurrection Life (vv. 3-5)

3. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us

new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

After the introductory greetings of [verses 1 and 2](#), the verse before us marks the beginning of the thanksgiving section of 1 Peter. Most letters of this era include a brief statement thanking whatever god or gods the writer worships. New Testament letters turn this convention into an occasion for praise of the one true God.

The thanksgiving section opens here with a specific focus: thanks to God for the suffering Christian's relationship with the crucified and risen Jesus. Indeed, the letter as a whole emphasizes this relationship.

Similar to what Jesus says in [John 3:3](#), Peter describes that relationship in terms of being "born again" ([1 Peter 1:23](#)). That points to the new beginning to life as brought about by *the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. Because he was raised from the dead, so are those who are united with him ([Romans 6:3-11](#); [Colossians 2:12](#); [1 Peter 3:21](#); etc.). In this new life, Christians have a *living hope*—a confident expectation about the future.

4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,

Peter portrays the experience of the new life as *an inheritance*. That term reminds us of the Old Testament's description of God's gift of the promised land to Israel ([Numbers 34:2](#)). But the realization of the promise of which Peter writes is more certain than that one. Israel's disobedience meant exile from the land of promise; by contrast, the Christian's inheritance is assured.

Peter describes this assurance by piling up terms that stress its utter permanence (compare [Matthew 6:19, 20](#)). Unlike any earthly inheritance, it cannot fail because it is *kept in heaven*. That expression also indicates that the Christian's inheritance is to be experienced beyond the limits of life on earth. The hardships in the world cannot touch that blessing, for it is kept safe by God, who rules from Heaven. The gift of new life that Christians experience now, they shall have forever.

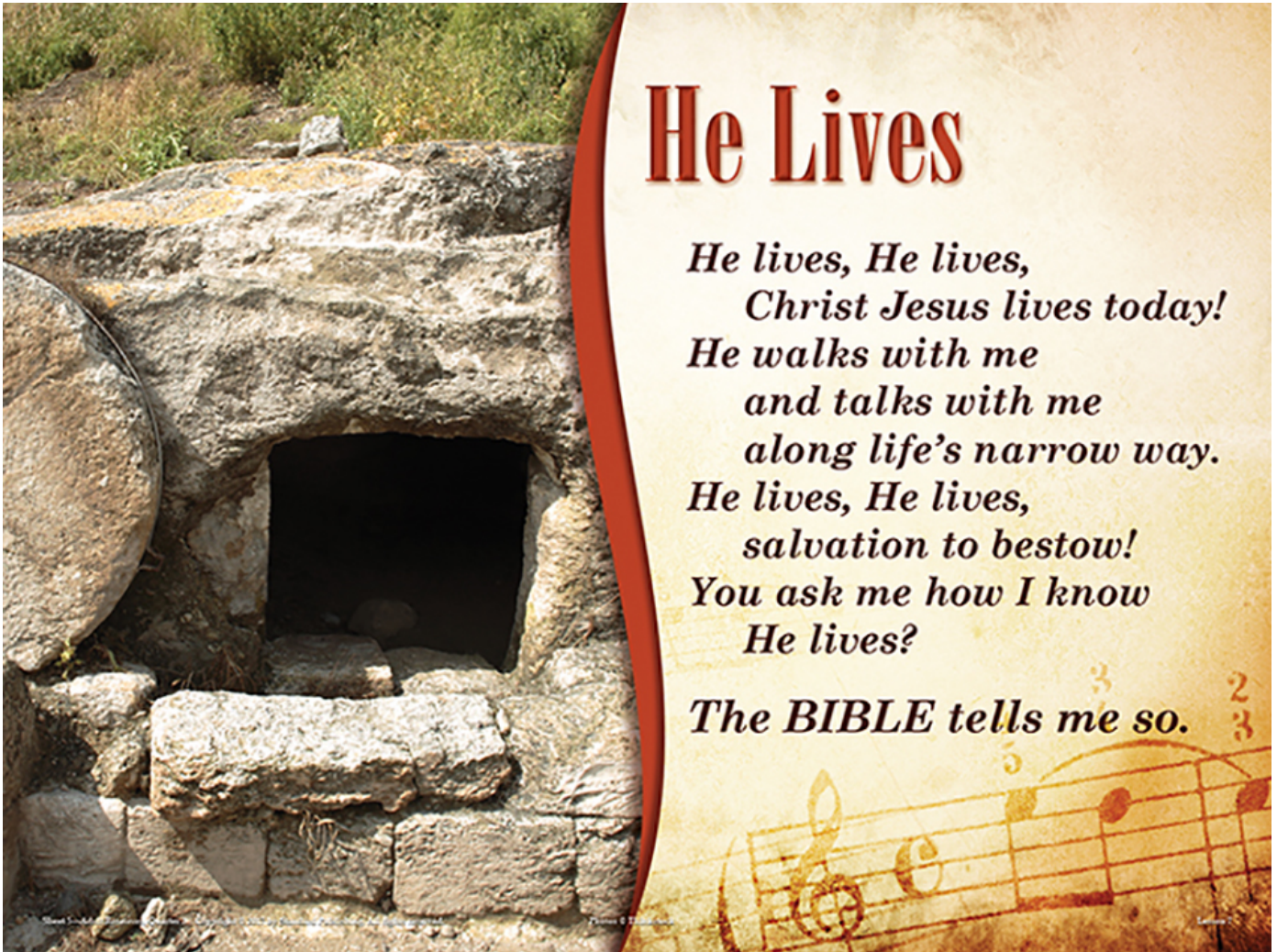
THE ONLY THREAT

Huguette Clark inherited her father's fortune, which he made in copper mining. When she died at age 104 in 2011, her last will and testament specified that 75 percent of her \$300 million estate was to go to charity. The remaining 25 percent was to be divided among various nonrelatives and a foundation.

Then, of course, came the civil lawsuits and criminal investigations.

When the dust had settled two years later, distant relatives ended up receiving substantial amounts. By contrast, someone originally designated to receive about \$30 million ended up with nothing. No earthly inheritance can be considered totally sure!

By contrast, Peter assures us that our eternal inheritance *is* secure. We need not worry that others may steal it. No court action can revoke it. No power of darkness can prevent us from receiving it. Even so, Peter also warns of one threat to this certain inheritance. You can read about it in [2 Peter 3:17](#).—C. R. B.



He Lives

*He lives, He lives,
Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me
and talks with me
along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives,
salvation to bestow!
You ask me how I know
He lives?*

The BIBLE tells me so.

Visual for Lesson 7. Start a discussion by asking learners why the changed wording to the chorus of this familiar hymn is superior to the original.

5. who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Jesus' followers, though threatened on all sides, are nevertheless secure in every situation. Their security rests in *God's power*, which is greater than any force the hostile world can muster. Already experiencing God's salvation in the present (1 Peter 1:3), Christians look forward to that aspect of their *salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time*—the time when God's victory will be completed at Christ's coming. Then the world will see what Christians already know: that God is victorious in Christ, and so are those who are united with Christ by faith.

B. Rejoicing in Fiery Trials (vv. 6-9)

6. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

The Christians' standing before God is in sharp contrast with their standing with the world. In a hostile world, they face many *trials*. These are tests of the Christian's faith in God's victory through Christ's resurrection.

Such testings come in many ways, each bringing a new challenge. They are no light matter: they cause deep sorrow, like the grief of death. Yet they do not overcome the joy that lives in the heart of the person who belongs to God in Christ. As Christ's resurrection has overturned his followers' grief at his death, so it empowers them in the midst of testings.

7. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus

Christ is revealed.

Put to the test, true *faith* witnesses to the power of God's victory in Christ (compare [Psalm 66:10](#)). As *gold is refined by fire*, separated from the less precious minerals mixed with it, so the faith of Christians is made purer and stronger by the challenges they experience (compare [Zechariah 13:9](#); [James 1:12](#); [Revelation 2:2, 3, 13, 19](#); contrast [Ezekiel 22:18](#); [Matthew 13:20, 21](#)).

God's plan reached its climax and his victory was secured as Christ underwent his own fiery trial. Believers whose faith is refined by trial show their unity with Christ in suffering and their empowerment by Christ's resurrection. *When Jesus Christ is revealed*, when he returns to appear to all as the world's true king, the faithfulness of suffering believers will be testimony to his victory over evil. The result of that testing is ultimately God's glorification.

REFINING PROCESS AND RESULT

Gold has been highly valued from ancient times for all the reasons we know so well. But to get gold to its purest, most desirable state requires that it undergo a refining process.

When extracting gold from ore, smelting is the first step. This requires heat of about 1950° Fahrenheit. After successful extraction, impurities are removed by further melting. Borax and soda ash are added to the liquefied gold, which causes separation of gold from impurities.

Peter's comparison of faith with purified gold carries two vital truths. First, gold perishes. Think about how we tend to lose gold rings, etc., and how these are subject to theft. Even if a gold ring is never lost or stolen, it remains part of the physical world to be destroyed ([2 Peter 3:10](#)). Second, faith must be refined to be proven valid. That process comes in the crucible of "fiery ordeal" ([1 Peter 4:12-19](#)). If you haven't had one (or more) yet, you will. Be ready.—C. R. B.

What Do You Think?

In what ways have you seen God glorified through human trials? What have such experiences taught you?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Regarding trials you have experienced
- Regarding the trials of others

8. **Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,**

Peter is known to his readers as having been an eyewitness of Jesus' earthly ministry ([2 Peter 1:16-18](#)). But the readers are not eyewitnesses (*have not seen him*). Even so, they believe in Jesus because of the testimony of those who were there (compare [John 20:29](#)). Peter's audience trusts his testimony, so they put their confident trust in the invisible Christ. They express a deep, heartfelt joy that he has made them his and now rules over them.

Now these believers are under social pressure for their faith. This is pressure they experience firsthand. The question for them is whether what they see on earth will be more powerful than what they do not see, that is, Christ's triumphant rule from Heaven.

The day will come when they do indeed see Christ's rule, a day when all will see it. In the meantime, Christians express their belief in the unseen victory of Christ, present and future, with joy that is almost as difficult to express as Christ's glory is difficult to see.

What Do You Think?

What can we do to encourage others' faith in the risen Christ, whom we have not seen?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- In face-to-face discussions
- When separated by great distance
- During a crisis
- Other

As they live this way and express this *glorious joy*, Christians are the "seen" manifestations of the "unseen" victorious power of Christ at work in our lives. Our joy while enduring suffering testifies to the world that the Christ who died is the Christ who rose and rules.

9. **for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

This whole process—believing in the unseen, risen, glorified Christ and rejoicing in suffering because of him—naturally and inevitably accompanies the saving work that God is doing in our lives. *The end result of your faith* here is not when faith comes to an end. Rather, it speaks to the goal or purpose of our faith.

To receive that end does not speak merely of something that lies in the future. The sentence structure in the original language shows that this

receiving happens along with the believing and rejoicing of [verse 8](#). *The salvation of your souls* is indeed life beyond the grave, but it is also the remaking of our lives in the present. Because God's love is victorious in Christ, you and I are already living in the salvation that God has for us forever. The blessed life we have now as God's people will only become greater when Christ appears.

Conclusion

A. The Christ of the Empty Tomb

Christ's resurrection is the turning point of all history. On that incomparable day, God defeated death for all time. He turned the tide of human life, bringing the evil one and those who serve him to their knees. He brought the fullness of his undeserved blessing to all who put their faith in the risen Christ.

Look to the empty tomb. Look to the lives of those who declare the Christ of that empty tomb to be Lord. As you do so, you will see God's victory.

B. Prayer

Lord, though we face many hardships that put us to the test, we rejoice in the new life we have through Jesus. Guide us so that we can live lives that express his glory. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

See Christ's victory again for the first time.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Into the Lesson

Before class begins, write this list of historic turning points on the board or distribute as photocopied handouts:

1. President Truman orders atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, ending World War II in the Pacific.
2. Martin Luther nails his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg, providing the catalyst for the Protestant Reformation.
3. Gutenberg produces a Bible using movable type, starting the age of the printed book in the West.
4. Alexander the Great begins a 10-year campaign to conquer most of the civilized world, resulting in the spread of the Greek language and culture.
5. Christopher Columbus leads the first of four voyages to find Asia and lands in what is now the Bahamas. This opens the door to European colonization of what is now called the American continents.

Under the list of turning points, have these years: A. 336 BC. B. AD 1492. C. AD 1517. D. AD 1455. E. AD 1945.

Ask learners to match the events with the years. The answers are 1=E. 2=C. 3=D. 4=A. 5=B.

Lead into the Bible study by saying, "History has had noticeable turning points. But any turning points we can mention pale in comparison to an event that happened early on a Sunday morning in approximately AD 30. Let's explore this fact further."

Into the Word

Divide the class into two groups; give each group paper and pens. Each group should read its assigned text, looking for key words and phrases. Learners are to use the words to create an acrostic from the key word you gave them. Assignments and sample acrostics follow:

Group 1—DESPAIR (John 20:1-10)

Still **D**ark

Desecrat **E**d Grave

Body **S**tolen

Peter Investigates

Gr **A**ve Clothes Left

Lim **I**ted Understanding

Return Home

Group 2—VICTORY (1 Peter 1:3-9)

Li Ving Hope

Inheritance

Christ's Love

Salva Tion

P Ower of God's protection

New Bi Rth

Jo Y

Allow time for groups to share their acrostics and summarize their assignments.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “From Early Morning to the Late Show” activity from the reproducible page. Select volunteers to play Peter, John, Mary Magdalene, and a fictitious talk show host. Use this skit to help explain the Bible texts.

Into Life

Say, “You have a good friend who is a new Christian. Not growing up in the church, this person has a lot of questions and says, ‘I understand why Christmas is so important, but why does the church make such a big deal about Easter? What makes this day extra special?’”

Have learners use today’s lesson text as well as other passages (such as [Romans 6:4](#); [8:11, 34](#); [1 Corinthians 15:54-57](#); [2 Corinthians 4:14](#)) to explain the importance of the resurrection. Allow time for discussion, and close in group prayer.