

WEEK 26: JESUS' CRUCIFIXION, DEATH, AND BURIAL

MIDDLE SCHOOL

GOALS

Our knowledge of all four gospels enables us to read the icons relating to Jesus' life

LESSON

Materials Needed: Bible

Extended Learning Opportunity for Teachers:

The Gospel of Matthew: Torah for the Church by Fr. Lawrence Farley, pgs 363-384

The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Matthew by Blessed Theophylact, pgs 239-252

EVENTS PRIOR TO THE CRUCIFIXION - THE SOLDIERS MOCK JESUS

READ MATTHEW 27:27-31

The icon of the Bridegroom depicts Jesus wearing a crown of thorns, holding a reed in His right hand, and dressed in a scarlet robe. They did this to make fun of Jesus before sending Him off to be crucified.

During Holy Week, we have the Bridegroom Services on the evening of Palm Sunday, Holy Monday, and Holy Tuesday. This icon will be in the church for us to venerate.

EVENTS PRIOR TO THE CRUCIFIXION - SIMON OF CYRENE

READ MATTHEW 27:32

A man named Simon, who was from the city of Cyrene in northern Africa, was told to help carry Jesus' Cross. St. Theophylact explains:

The three evangelists say that Simon carried the cross of Jesus, while John says that the Lord carried it Himself. It is likely that both events occurred. At first Jesus carried the cross as no one else was willing to carry it; but along the way they found Simon and placed the cross on him. You, O reader, learn this well, that "Simon" means "obedience"; therefore he who possesses obedience is he who carries the cross of Christ. And Cyrene was one of the five cities of Pentapolis, signifying the five senses that are compelled to bear the cross.

CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

READ MATTHEW 27:33-44

Gall: a bitter tasting substance, in this case myrrh (Mark 15:23). It was offered as a narcotic to dull the pain, but after tasting it and discovering its contents, He was not willing to drink it. (Fr. Lawrence Farley, pg 374)

During the time of Jesus, when someone was sentenced to death as a punishment, the person was typically killed either by beheading or crucifixion. This was determined largely by the person's social standing within the community. Those who were high ranking, wealthy, or well thought of (such as St. John the Baptist) were beheaded. This was seen as merciful because their death was usually quick. Those who were criminals or not well thought of were crucified. Crucifixion was an extremely painful and cruel way to die.

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

READ MATTHEW 27:45-56

In iconography, Jesus' crucifixion will be depicted showing what we know from all four gospels, not just one gospel.

Looking at the icon of the crucifixion provided in this lesson, this event is occurring outside of the city of Jerusalem depicted by the city walls in the background. Jesus is in the middle of the icon while the robbers are on either side of Him and a sign is hung above Jesus' head with the accusation, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

There is a skull at the bottom of the icon, directly below Jesus. He was crucified at Golgotha, the Place of a Skull.

On the right side of the icon, a man offers Jesus a sponge filled with sour wine on a reed. Also on the right side, we see a centurion wearing a soldier's uniform and lifting his arm up towards Jesus as he declares, "Truly this was the Son of God!" The beloved St. John (the Theologian) is between these two men in the foreground.

On the left side of the icon, in the foreground we see Mary Magdalene, the Theotokos (who is described as Mary the mother of James and Joses - who are St. Joseph's children,

step mom), and Salome (the mother of James and John). In the background, we see the soldier who pierces Jesus' side. (John 19:33-34)

In the icon of the crucifixion provided in this lesson which depicts only three people, we see Christ in the center on the Cross, while the Theotokos is depicted on the left side and St. John the Theologian is depicted on the right side.

John 19:26-27:

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.

JESUS' BURIAL

READ MATTHEW 27:45-56

Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy and well-known man. He wanted to make sure Jesus was given a proper burial and requested Jesus' body from Pilate. Jesus' body was prepared and then wrapped in expensive fabric for his burial in a brand new tomb.

In the icon of Jesus being prepared for His burial, we see Jesus lying down in the middle, His mother cradling His head, the myrrh-bearing women behind the Theotokos, Nicodemus (gospel of John) placing his cheek tenderly against Jesus' hand, and Joseph of Arimathea at Jesus's feet as he prepares to wrap His body in fine linen. In the background, we see the city walls of Jerusalem and the mountains surrounding them where they will lay Jesus' body. In the background on the the right, we see the tomb being "hewn out of the rock."

The icon of Jesus' burial is oftentimes embroidered onto cloth, called the Epitaphios, meaning "upon the tomb", and placed inside the kouvouklion (funeral bier) on Holy Friday.



IHS XPS

THE
BRIDE GROOM

WHERE WAS THE CITY OF CYRENE?

Matthew 27:32

“Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross.”



Courtesy of biblemapper.com



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ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Lay out the icons on a table in the classroom, but mix them up first. 1. After reading Matthew 27, ask the students to find the icon relating to verses 28 & 29: “And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ “ 2. Ask the students to find the icon of Simon of Cyrene helping Jesus carry His cross. 3. Ask the students to find the icon of Jesus’ Crucifixion. 4. Ask the students to find the icon of Jesus’ burial.
- Label the white board with: Palm Sunday Evening (Bridegroom), Holy Monday (Bridegroom), Holy Tuesday (Bridegroom), Holy Wednesday: Holy Unction, Holy Thursday morning: Mystical Supper, Holy Thursday evening (12 Gospels read relating to the Crucifixion of Christ), Holy Friday (Burial of Christ), Holy Saturday: Christ in the tomb. Then, ask the children to place the icons on the correct day in correlation to the services for that day. (You will have to use some icons more than once.)
- After reading Matthew 27, hold up each of the icons and ask students to summarize what is happening in the icon.
- Lay out the icons on a table and mix them up. After reading Matthew 27, ask the students to put the icons in correct chronological order.