

# Amazing Students Easter MS

## Cross Check

### Series Description:

Doubt is everywhere—in classrooms, comment sections, and late-night scrolling—especially when it comes to the resurrection of Jesus. Cross Check invites students to examine the core claim of Christianity with clarity, confidence, and courage: that Jesus truly died and was truly raised. Grounded in Scripture and supported by history and apologetics, this series walks through the most common alternative explanations students encounter today—from conspiracy theories to claims of legend—and shows why none of them hold up under honest scrutiny. Rooted in passages like 1 Corinthians 15, the Gospels, and firsthand historical sources, each session pairs clear theological truth with compelling evidence, helping students see that Christian faith is not wishful thinking but a response to real events in real history. The goal is not just to answer questions, but to form a resilient faith—students who understand why they believe, who can engage skepticism without fear, and who trust that the risen Jesus is worthy of their lives, worship, and witness.

### Core Theology Insights:

Resurrection, Truth, Faith, Redemption, Authority, Hope, Restoration

### Emphasized Relationships:

God & Self

### Response:

Authentic Faith, Ultimate Authority



### Title

The Lord is Risen

### Scripture

John 20: 1-23

### Bottom Line

We can trust that the Lord is Risen.

25 min

# Teaching

5 min

## Introduction (ME)

No supplies needed

### Leader Note:

*Before you teach, share a real but age-appropriate story from your own life about losing something important or walking through real grief. This could be the death of someone you loved, a major family change, a friendship that ended, or a long season of sadness where you didn't feel like yourself. Be honest about what it felt like, including any "God, why?" questions you wrestled with. Don't give graphic details; keep it simple, but real. Then transition into the example story below.*

What's up, everyone? Got a question for you ... by show of hands, how many of you have ever put together a puzzle before? Probably all of us at least once.

But what I'm talking about is not a kid's puzzle. I mean a real one. Like, one with *at least* 1,000 pieces. Small pieces. You have a small color palette to work with and maybe the picture on the box is some beautiful painting or a wild scene packed with details.

If you've done one, you'll know there's a strategy.

You've got to start by taking all the pieces out of the box and laying them in front of you. It would take forever to try to solve a puzzle by pulling one piece out at a time. Then you flip all the pieces over so you're not looking at the cardboard side. Then, you hunt for all the corners or pieces with straight edges. You need to build out your frame before you start the real work of piecing together the details. You pick one section, one detail from the picture, one color, and you build out from there.

See it's usually **the details that make the bigger picture**.

That's true in life, too. Even in something like a criminal investigation. Police typically don't show up to a crime scene and immediately tell the press, "It was Clara with a candlestick! Case closed!"

NO. They start with the details. Who was there? What did people see? What was said? What evidence is left behind? What explanations actually fit the facts?

That is exactly how we need to approach what we're talking about today. Because it's Easter, and I want to help you answer two very important questions:

Did Jesus **really die**? And did He **really** rise from the dead? Be honest. You don't have to say it out loud.

5 min

**Tension (WE)**

No supplies needed

Some of you are like, "Yeah, obviously."

Some of you are like, "I want to believe that, but I'm not sure."

And some of you are like, "I don't know what I believe."  
All three of those are welcome here today

So, let's do this, let's take all the pieces out of the box, let's flip them over, and let's build out our framework.

The CORE claim of our faith, of Christianity, is this: **Jesus Christ was fully man and fully God. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered death, and was buried, and rose again on the third day.**

The reason this statement is so huge, so massive, is because if this is *not* true, our faith, our church, our words—they all mean *nothing*.

I'm not being dramatic. That's what the Bible says too. Check this out: **"And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Corinthians 15:14 NIV).**

Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection of Jesus. That's our frame of reference. This is the picture we're trying to build.

And here's the thing: Since the resurrection, people have been trying to tear apart this framework. To claim that it's not true. That it's a lie, that it's made up.

So, what are the details that make up this picture? What are the things we need to look for in order to prove that this claim really is true?

Today, we're going to look at five:

1. Did Jesus actually die?
2. Did He really come back to life?
3. Were there any witnesses? Are they trustworthy?
4. Can the biblical accounts be trusted?
5. Is there evidence outside of the Bible?

Let's go.

**Optional: Play Teaching Video w/ Jon Rush, Skip to Application.**

5 min

**Truth (GOD)**

No supplies needed

**LEADER NOTE:** We recommend that if you choose not to use the teaching video, you create slides and pull in pictures to help illustrate each detail of the resurrection.

### Detail #1: Did Jesus really die?

One of the most common arguments against the resurrection is called the "Swoon Theory."

Before I explain this theory, turn to someone next to you and answer this question:

**Do you think someone could survive being crucified? Yes or no.**

You've got 10 seconds. Go.

Alright, lock back in.

So, this theory claims that Jesus didn't actually die on the cross, but that after a full day of extreme pain and bodily stress, He simply fainted or passed out, and later woke up in the tomb. Interesting theory. But here are the facts.

The Romans were **really good** at killing people. The cross was a Roman torture device with an end goal in mind. You were not meant to survive it. It was designed for execution. Crucifixion caused death by blood loss, shock, and ultimately, suffocation. It was public, brutal, and very intentional.

Not only that, but Roman law ensured it led to death by making Roman soldiers responsible for confirming that death. If they failed in this, they would wind up on a cross themselves.

***"But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe" (John 19:33-35 NIV).***

In order to breathe on the cross, you would have to push up, using your legs, to take each breath. It was standard practice after some time had passed for the soldiers to break a person's legs, effectively making sure death was right around the next five minutes.

But Jesus was already dead. So the spear? That wasn't random. That was true confirmation.

**Mark 15:44-45 (NIV) also tells us: "Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph."**

People were watching. Jesus' enemies were watching. The Romans would have made extra sure Jesus was dead because if someone survived Rome, it would mean that Rome had failed.

I know that's heavy. But here's why this matters. Christianity doesn't say Jesus *almost* died. It says He fully died.

**Detail #2: Did He really come back to life?**

Okay, quick thought experiment.

If you were one of Jesus' disciples at this point in the story, would you be feeling brave ... or terrified?

Show me with your face. Oh, beautiful, all of you.

See, another argument against the resurrection is that Jesus didn't actually come back to life, but that there was a plot to steal His body and make it look like He did. In short, it was all a hoax. Interesting theory. Here are the facts.

Matthew 27 tells us that the Pharisees went to Pontius Pilate and asked for the tomb to be guarded. Why? Because Jesus had been telling people He would be raised from the dead. They themselves thought the disciples of Jesus would try to steal His body and set up guards against them.

The tomb was sealed with a heavy stone that multiple people would've worked together to put into place. Roman guards were placed there for 24/7 surveillance.

Not only that, but under Roman law, grave robbing was considered a serious crime, regardless of whose tomb it was.

We also know that the disciples at this point in the story were terrified. Do any of you remember in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested? They all abandoned Him! They were scared. Scattered. Peter denied he knew Jesus, and eventually went back to fishing. They themselves believed Jesus was dead and staying that way.

So knowing this, the question becomes: How exactly would unarmed fishermen overpower Roman soldiers, move a massive stone unnoticed, and steal the body without getting caught?

Matthew 28 tells us that the guards on duty were actually **paid to lie**. That actually admits something important.

The tomb was empty. No one stole the body. And all of the Jewish leaders were terrified by what that meant. Yes, Jesus really did come back to life.

**Detail #3: Were there any witnesses? And are they trustworthy?**

The answer is, of course, yes. Mary Magdalene being one of them. But another claim against the resurrection is that the witnesses aren't trustworthy. See, in the ancient world, women were not considered reliable legal witnesses. Meaning, in court, a woman's testimony didn't count. They were viewed as second-class citizens and certainly not worth listening to in that culture.

Debunked then? Well let me ask you this: If the resurrection was just a made-up story, wouldn't you be producing witnesses that were

considered reliable? You would never choose women to be the first eyewitnesses! Not if you're trying to convince people of its accuracy. And yet, all four Gospels record that women discovered the empty tomb. Luke 24:5-6 (NIV) says: *"Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."*

And in John 20, Mary Magdalene encounters the risen Jesus. When He speaks her name, she recognizes Him and goes to tell the disciples: *"I have seen the Lord"* (Matthew 20:18 NIV).

God chose women, in that culture, to be the first to announce that Jesus had risen from the dead.

This is one of those details that only matters if you stop and think. If you were making this story up ... you wouldn't write it this way.

#### **Detail #4: Can the biblical accounts be trusted?**

There's so much we could unpack here, but let's focus on this accusation that is often used. Another argument against the resurrection is that the stories written about it (the Gospels) were written too long after Jesus' death to be reliable sources. There was too much time to allow for the story to change and shift from fact to fiction. Interesting theory. BUT ...

The earliest resurrection creed in 1 Corinthians 15 dates to within just 2-5 years of Jesus' death and resurrection. And I know we all live in the modern world where it takes people all of 10 seconds to post about something, but for that time period, that's incredibly quick. And think about who wrote 1 Corinthians—Paul the apostle.

Paul personally knew Peter and James, Jesus' first disciples. James' letters were written between AD 48 and 62. The Gospels themselves were written within the lifetimes of eyewitnesses.

And just for comparison? Think of other great names in history.

Alexander the Great? We have no records of him written until 400 years after his death. Julius Caesar? No records written of him until 100 years after his death. Buddha? His teachings were written 300-400 years after his death. Muhammad's biography didn't come around until 150 years after his death.

Jesus' resurrection was written about in real time, in real history.

First Corinthians 15:20 (NLT) says: *"But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead."*

And that was written before the time needed for a story to drift into myth or legend.

#### **Detail #5 Is there evidence outside of the Bible?**

Let's just say what we already talked about isn't enough. It's not enough that Paul wrote about it. Did anyone else in that time period write about it? Are there other authors who can confirm? Oh, I'm so glad you asked. There are FOUR Gospels. Not just one witness. Four. Some of you may have wondered why the same story of Jesus gets told four times in the new testament. This is a major reason why. One person's testimony is easily thrown out. But four is incredibly hard to overcome.

5 min

**Application (YOU)**

No supplies needed

5 min

**Landing (ME)**

No supplies needed

Outside of the Bible, famous Jewish Historian Josephus (who, by the way, was not a Christian and therefore would maybe have been motivated as a Jew to deny the resurrection) confirmed in his writings that Jesus lived, He died by crucifixion under Roman authority, and that the disciples claimed resurrection.

From a Roman perspective? Pontius Pilate's existence is confirmed by archaeology and crucifixion was a standard Roman execution method. The evidence is pretty stacked. We confidently say that the details have built a clear picture.

OKAY, that's a lot of history, evidence, and Scripture.

Remember, we said the **core claim** of our faith, of Christianity, is this: Jesus Christ was fully man and fully God. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered death, was buried, and rose again on the third day.

And when we look at all the evidence, it's actually much more difficult to deny this than it is to see it for what it is, the absolute truth.

But here's what I want you to know today. The resurrection isn't just something to prove. This is about someone to know.

Personally, I think the greatest proof that Jesus is alive isn't just written down in history books. It's that today, right now, all over the world, people are still encountering Him.

He is alive right now.

You can know Him right now.

You can experience Him right now.

So here's the next question you've got to answer. If Jesus really did rise from the dead, what does that mean for you?

Not for your parents, your friends, your church, or even your past. What does it mean for you, right now?

Because if Jesus is alive, then He isn't distant. He's not just a good idea or a really cool story. If Jesus is alive, that means what He said is real, and that you and I have a ticket into Heaven.

Guys, His resurrection is everything.

In John 14:6 (NIV), Jesus says: *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Jesus is the **way**. This means that as we make decisions, as we go through life, we have someone to follow. We have a way we're meant to go. It leads us into Heaven. Paradise with Father God.

Jesus is the **truth**. This means that we don't need to be confused. We don't need to stumble through life wondering who we are or who He is. He is not just a man that lied. He is trustworthy. He is true. He *is* the truth.

Jesus is the **life**. This means that if we want to find life, we find it in Him. We don't find it in our grades, our friends, our accomplishments, or our talents. We don't find it in video games, food, social media, or whatever else this world has to offer. It's JESUS.

He gave us everything. His resurrection is everything. Jesus is everything.

But is Jesus truly your everything? Have you truly given your life to Him?

Bow your heads and close your eyes. No one is looking around. Just look at Jesus.

Pray with me.

"Jesus, You are everything. You are God, and yet You became a man so that we would not have to suffer the consequences of our sin. You paid for that sin on the cross, where You died. You were buried, but on the third day, You rose again. Jesus, You are everything. We are so thankful for who You are."

Everyone, if you want to follow Jesus, there is no better place than right here and right now. Make that decision and give Him everything today. He is so worthy. He is so worth it. If that's you, pray this with me.

***LEADER NOTE: Give a clear opportunity for students to choose to follow Jesus, lead a simple prayer of surrender, and then celebrate and affirm their decision***

32 min

# Groups

2 min

## Think About This

No supplies needed

*The goal this week is to help students understand that Easter isn't just about remembering something that happened a long time ago. Jesus really died, really rose again, and is alive right now. If that's true, then Jesus isn't just a story to learn about, He's someone we can know, trust, and follow today.*

*Middle schoolers are concrete thinkers who are just beginning to question what they've been told. Some will answer quickly and confidently. Others will shrug, joke, or copy their friends. That's normal.*

*As you lead:*

- *Keep questions focused and simple.*
- *Let students respond without correcting every answer.*
- *Avoid graphic details about death.*
- *Reinforce that questions are welcome, but Jesus being alive is the anchor.*
- *If a student shares fear about death or heaven, respond gently and with reassurance.*

**Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed, and don't feel like you need to answer all of them.**

## Warm Up Questions

No supplies needed

### Would This Change Anything?

Say: "I'm going to read a few statements. Answer honestly by standing, raising your hand, or thumbs up/thumbs down."

*Read 3-4 of these. Pause after each.*

- If someone proved your favorite food is actually terrible for you, would you stop eating it?
- If you found out your biggest test this year was canceled, would your week change?
- If someone came back from the dead and you knew it was real, would you listen to what they said?
- If Jesus really rose from the dead and is alive right now ... would that change anything about how you live?

10 min

## Discussion Questions (Core Questions)

No supplies needed

*(These hit the heart of the week's content.)*

1. When you hear "Easter" or "resurrection," what do you think of first?
  - Church
  - Candy
  - Jesus
  - Something else
2. Be honest. Which feels hardest to believe?
  - That Jesus existed
  - That Jesus died
  - That Jesus came back to life
  - Why?
3. The teaching said Christianity depends on the resurrection. Does that surprise you? Why or why not?
4. If Jesus stayed dead, what do you think would be different about Christianity?
5. Who do you usually trust more:
  - Someone who says something
  - Or someone who proves it
  - Why?
6. If Jesus really beat death, what does that say about how powerful He is?

10 min

## Discussion Questions (Dive Deep)

No supplies needed

*(These dig into the Bible, context, and theology in student language.)*

1. Read Romans 8:11 together. Who does it say lives in believers? Why is that important?
2. Why do you think God wanted people to see Jesus alive instead of just hearing about it?
3. The disciples were scared after Jesus died. How do you think seeing Him alive changed them?
4. How is Jesus being alive different from learning about a hero in a history book?
5. The verse says the same power that raised Jesus lives in us. What do you think that means for everyday life?
6. What's one thing you'd want to ask Jesus if you believed He was really alive and listening?

10 min

## Discussion Questions (Culture Questions)

No supplies needed

*(These connect the topic to real life and the world students live in.)*

1. People sometimes say, "Believe whatever you want." Why do you think the resurrection feels bigger than just an opinion?
2. Why do you think people joke about death instead of talking about it seriously?
3. How does knowing Jesus is alive change how we think about fear, mistakes, or the future?
4. What's one way people your age try to find life or happiness that doesn't actually last?
5. If Jesus is alive, what does that mean about how much He cares about your life right now?

## WRAP-UP / PRAYER

No supplies needed

*Close with something like: "You don't have to have everything figured out tonight. But if Jesus really rose from the dead, He's worth paying attention to."*

*Pray briefly, thanking Jesus for being alive and asking Him to help students trust Him more.*

*Let students know that leaders are available after group if they want to pray, ask questions, or talk more.*

# Resources

## Teaching Outline

No supplies needed

### AMAZING STUDENTS LESSON – EASTER

**Theme:** The Resurrection of Jesus Is Everything

**Key Verse:** Romans 8:11

**Bottom Line:** The Resurrection of Jesus is everything.

**Optional Video:** *Debunking the Debunkers* – Jon Rush

#### I. INTRODUCTION

##### A. Opening

- Ask: Who has done a 1,000-piece puzzle?
  
- Explain puzzle strategy:
  - Dump pieces out
  - Flip them over
  - Build the frame (edges first)
  - Focus on details to reveal the bigger picture

##### B. Big Idea from Illustration

- Details build the bigger picture.
  
- Same principle applies to:
  - Criminal investigations
  - Truth-seeking
  - The resurrection of Jesus

##### C. Two Central Questions

1. Did Jesus really die?

2. Did He really rise from the dead?

- Acknowledge different belief levels in the room.
- All doubts and questions are welcome.

## II. TENSION

### A. Core Claim of Christianity

- Jesus was fully God and fully man.
- He was crucified, died, buried, and rose on the third day.

### B. Stakes Are High

- 1 Corinthians 15:14 — If Christ is not raised, faith is useless.
- Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection.

### C. Framework for Investigation

Five key details to examine:

1. Did Jesus actually die?
2. Did He really come back to life?
3. Were there witnesses?
4. Can the biblical accounts be trusted?
5. Is there evidence outside the Bible?

## TRUTH

### Detail #1: Did Jesus Really Die?

#### A. The "Swoon Theory"

- Claim: Jesus fainted and later revived.

**B. Historical & Medical Reality of Crucifixion**

- Roman crucifixion = execution method.
- Death by blood loss, shock, suffocation.
- Soldiers were responsible for confirming death.

**C. Biblical Evidence**

- John 19:33–35 – Spear in His side.
- Mark 15:44–45 – Centurion confirms death to Pilate.

**D. Conclusion**

- Jesus did not “almost die.”
- Christianity claims full death.

**Detail #2: Did Jesus Really Rise?****A. The “Stolen Body” Theory**

- Claim: Disciples stole the body.

**B. Facts About the Tomb**

- Guarded by Roman soldiers.
- Sealed with heavy stone.
- Grave robbing was a serious crime.

**C. Disciples’ Condition**

- Fearful and scattered.
- Peter denied Jesus.
- Not acting bold or strategic.

**D. Matthew 28**

- Guards were bribed to lie.
- Implies the tomb was truly empty.

**E. Conclusion**

- The empty tomb demands explanation.
- Resurrection best fits the facts.

**Detail #3: Were There Witnesses?****A. Women as First Witnesses**

- Mary Magdalene and others.
- Luke 24:5–6
- John 20 encounter

**B. Cultural Context**

- Women were not considered reliable witnesses.
- If fabricated, male witnesses would have been used.

**C. Significance**

- The inclusion of women strengthens credibility.
- Story doesn't read like propaganda.

**Detail #4: Can the Biblical Accounts Be Trusted?****A. "Too Late to Be Reliable" Argument**

- Claim: Written too long after events.

**B. Early Resurrection Creed**

- 1 Corinthians 15 written within 2–5 years.

- Paul knew Peter and James personally.

### **C. Timeline Comparison**

- Alexander the Great – 400 years later
- Julius Caesar – 100 years later
- Buddha – 300–400 years later
- Muhammad – 150 years later

### **D. Conclusion**

- Resurrection recorded in real time.
- Written within eyewitness lifetimes.

### **Detail #5: Evidence Outside the Bible**

#### **A. Multiple Gospel Accounts**

- Four independent testimonies.

#### **B. Jewish Historian Josephus**

- Confirms:
  - Jesus lived
  - Crucified under Roman authority
  - Disciples claimed resurrection

#### **C. Roman Confirmation**

- Pilate confirmed archaeologically.
- Crucifixion verified as Roman practice.

#### **D. Conclusion**

- Evidence is historically stacked.

### APPLICATION

#### A. Resurrection Is Not Just Proof

- It's about knowing a Person.
- Jesus is alive right now.
- People still encounter Him today.

#### B. Personal Question

- If Jesus rose from the dead...
  - What does that mean for YOU?

#### C. Implications

- If He's alive:
  - He isn't distant.
  - His words are true.
  - Salvation is real.
  - Heaven is available.

**Bottom Line Repeated:** His resurrection is everything.

### LANDING

#### A. John 14:6 (NIV):

"I am the way and the truth and the life."

#### B. Three Declarations

- Jesus is the Way → We have direction.
- Jesus is the Truth → We have clarity.

- Jesus is the Life → We find fulfillment in Him.

**C. Invitation**

- Is Jesus truly your everything?