

Lesson Six: The Resurrection and the Life

Main idea: Jesus has power over life and death.

Teacher preparation:

- Read Scripture references, Romans 5:12-21, 1 Corinthians 15
- Gather: Bible; dry erase markers or chart paper and markers; playing cards; terra cotta pots and saucers for each child (or plastic cups); packs of flower seeds for each child; paint; paint brushes; permanent markers; stickers; newspapers
- Print copies of the Lazarus skit (PDF) described below on this page
- Take time to meditate on this week's Scripture and think about your own life. What are your views of life and death? Do you let the resurrection of Jesus change how you live your life now? How do you allow Jesus to have power over your own life, and do you trust him fearlessly with your death?

Scripture references:

- John 11:1-44
- 1 Corinthians 15:42-44
- John 10:10
- Jeremiah 29:11

Game: Wink, Alive!

This game is similar to the sleepover game, "wink murder." To play, you have a detective and a "resurrector." To secretly decide who the detective and resurrector are, pass out playing cards to the kids. Have one ace and one king in the deck, and make the rest number cards. Make sure the total number of cards you have is equal to the total number of children you have playing. The ace is the detective, the king is the resurrector, and the number cards are the other players, who sit in a circle. If you would rather not use playing cards, you can make your own "secret cards" for the kids to draw from by using index cards. Blank index cards indicate the children sit in the circle – like the number cards – and "R" is for resurrector and a "D" is for detective. After all the kids have chosen a card, have them either give the cards back to you, or sit on them, so no one can see who the resurrector is. All the children, except the detective, sit in a circle on the floor, facing in. The detective stands in the middle of the circle. All the children sitting in the circle look around at each

other. The resurrector will make eye contact with another student and wink. The student who was winked at then stands up and shouts, "I'm alive!" The resurrector continues to wink at other players to bring them to life, while the detective tries to guess who the resurrector is. They may have three guesses at any time, but they have to figure it out before everyone comes to life! Play as many rounds as you have time for.

Message:

Open in prayer, then say, for the past several weeks, we have been learning about the seven I AM statements Jesus made, which are recorded in the book of John. Each time Jesus says "I AM," he is saying that he is God. Each I AM statement also reveals to us a new part of Jesus' character. It tells us a little more about who Jesus is. So far, we have learned that he is the Bread of Life, and fills up all our spiritual needs. We have also learned that he is the Light of the World, and he lights up our spiritual darkness. We learned that Jesus is the door to the sheepfold, and the only entrance to salvation and the Good Shepherd who sacrificed his life for our lives. Today we will study a story that many of you may be familiar with, and we will learn some deep and amazing things about Jesus while we're at it. We'll start today by reading the story in John 11. We're going to act it out like a play, so I need a few brave students and strong readers.

[The play is taken directly from The New Living Translation. I have only formatted the text to be read as a play, changing none of the language except to take out where it says "and Jesus said..." and other such superfluous statements. I also added a few places for mourners to cry and wail. You will need the following roles: narrator (could be you;) messenger (has one line;) Jesus (possibly the most difficult reading role;) disciples (could be played by one or two students, only has two lines;) Thomas (one line;) mourners (it would work well to have all students without active reading roles sit and play the mourners;) Martha (a fair amount of speaking;) Mary (has to listen and follow narrator's directions as well as speak;) unbeliever (has one line;) and Lazarus (not a speaking role, but must listen and follow narrator's directions.) If desired, you can pass out costumes. Wrap Lazarus loosely in toilet paper and have him lay under a table with a chair in front of it or surrounded by a circle of chairs for a cave. Make sure every child has a script, so they can all follow along in the story. If you choose to not go through the play, then read John 11:1-44 yourself with good inflection.]

(After the play, say,) Great job, everyone! Let's give a round of applause to our actors, for doing an excellent job in bringing this Bible story to life! Now let's all have a seat again and talk about this story. Let's start by discussing some of the emotions in this story. How did most of the people feel for most of this story? (sad, distraught, upset.) What are some other emotions some of the people may have been feeling? (some, like Thomas and the unbeliever, doubted. It says that Jesus was angry.) How do you think they felt at the end, when Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead? (surprised, happy.)

This story deals with a major theme that most people don't ever want to talk about. It can be uncomfortable and awkward, but it is something that everyone faces in their lives: DEATH. Why do you think people don't like to talk about death? (because it's sad, some people don't know what happens after we die, we'll miss the people we love when they die.) Have any of you known someone, a family member or a pet, who has died? How did you feel? (allow a few children to share. Be sensitive to their feelings as they share.) You know, people have felt this way about death forever. In the time that this story took place, the Jews had traditions on how to mourn when someone died. You would spend a week doing nothing but being sad and mourning the person who died. You couldn't even take a bath in that week! All you did was cry. Many, many people would come and mourn with you. There were even people who were professional mourners, who would show up and cry at any funeral, even if they didn't really know the person.

Jesus turns all of this way of thinking on its head when he makes his I AM statement in this passage. Who remember from our play what the fifth I AM statement of Jesus is? You can find it in your Bible, too, in John 11:25. (allow students to answer.) That's right, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." That's a really powerful statement! What does resurrection mean? (to bring back to life after someone has died.) You see, when Jesus claims to be the resurrection, he is claiming to be the only one who can bring life. That would have been a shocking statement to his listeners, who knew that only God has the power to give life. Jesus is saying he is God! He brings us to life when we are dead. This statement has two meanings. The first one is that Jesus is the one who gives us life after we die. He gives us life in heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 says it this way, "⁴²It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. ⁴³Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. ⁴⁴They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies,

there are also spiritual bodies.” These verses are saying that our bodies that we have now are like seeds. When you plant a seed, bury it under the soil, it dies. But when it dies, a plant grows up out of it. A tiny little seed becomes a big, beautiful tree when it dies! That is an image, a story, to help explain what will happen to us when we die. Dying does not mean the end of our lives. It means we get to become something bigger and greater in Jesus! So while it is okay, even right and healthy to be sad when someone dies, we can also be happy for them, because if they loved and followed Jesus on earth, in this life, they get to live forever with him in heaven!

The second part of the “resurrection” statement deals not with the end of our lives when our bodies die and we go to heaven with our new and improved spiritual bodies. The second part of the resurrection statement Jesus made is about our spiritual lives, right here and now. Let’s have a sword drill to learn more. Take out all bookmarks and fingers from your Bibles and hold them over your heads. When I say go, look up Ephesians 2:1-5. Go! (read, or have a student read, this section of Scripture.) “¹Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. ²You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.

⁴But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!)”

These verses tell us that before we know Jesus and obey him, we are dead in our sins. When we choose to follow our own desires instead of following God’s desires for us, we have no life. But Jesus died for us, while we were still dead in our sins. He died to give us life. When Jesus says he is the resurrection, he is saying he has power over death. He proved it by raising Lazarus from the dead, and then proved it again when he came back from the dead, too! Remember in our story, Lazarus had been dead for four days! His body was all smelly and rotting. Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead to show that he can bring us back from the death we deserve for our sins.

The next part of this I AM statement is “I am the life.” Not only does Jesus have the power to overcome death, he has the power to give us life!

Sometimes, some Christians get so excited about heaven that they forget to live full lives here on earth! We should be excited about heaven, but we have to remember that God gave us life here on earth, too. Remember a few weeks ago we learned that Jesus came to give us a “rich and satisfying life.” (John 10:10.) Let’s see what it says in Jeremiah 29:11. Everyone turn there now. It says, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’” When Jesus says “I am the resurrection and the life” he is saying he has the power over death, so we can live forever with him, and he has power over life, so we can be happy and do good things with him and for him, now and forever. He has this power because he is God, and he died on the cross for our sins, so we would not have to die. Then he came back to life! If we choose to love him and confess our sins to him, he comes and lives in our hearts, giving us life forever too! Now that’s good news!

Craft: Life Flower Pots

Cover the work surface with newspaper and pass out a small terra cotta pot and saucer to each child. (If this is beyond your budget, use plastic cups instead.) Using a permanent marker, help the children put their names on the bottom of each piece. Then allow them to use paints, permanent markers, and stickers to decorate their pots. Make sure that they right on there somewhere “Jesus is the resurrection and the life.” Let the pots dry. Add soil and a few flower seeds to each pot, or send home a pack of flower seeds with the pots for the children to plant at home. Remind them of the story from the lesson, how even though the seed dies, it grows into something beautiful and great, just like we do when we die and join Jesus in heaven.

Narrator: A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus.

Messenger: Lord, your dear friend is very sick.

Jesus: Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this.

Narrator: So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, he stayed where he was for the next two days. Finally, he said to his disciples,

Jesus: Let's go back to Judea.

Disciples: Rabbi, only a few days ago the people in Judea were trying to stone you. Are you going there again?

Jesus: There are twelve hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light. Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up.

Disciples: Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!

Narrator: They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died.

Jesus: Lazarus is dead. And for your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there, for now you will really believe. Come, let's go see him.

Thomas: Let's go, too—and die with Jesus.

Narrator: When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss.

Mourners: (cry and wail.)

Narrator: When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house.

Martha: Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.

Jesus: Your brother will rise again.

Martha: Yes, he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day.

Jesus: I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?

Martha: Yes, Lord, I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God. (*Turning to Mary*) The Teacher is here and wants to see you.

Narrator: So Mary immediately went to him. Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep. So they followed her there. When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said,

Mary: Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Mourners: (cry and wail.)

Narrator: When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled.

Jesus: Where have you put him?

Mourners: Lord, come and see.

Narrator: Then Jesus wept.

Jesus: (cry and wail.)

Mourners: See how much he loved him!

Unbeliever: This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?

Narrator: Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance.

Jesus: Roll the stone aside.

Martha: Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible.

Jesus: Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?

Narrator: So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said,

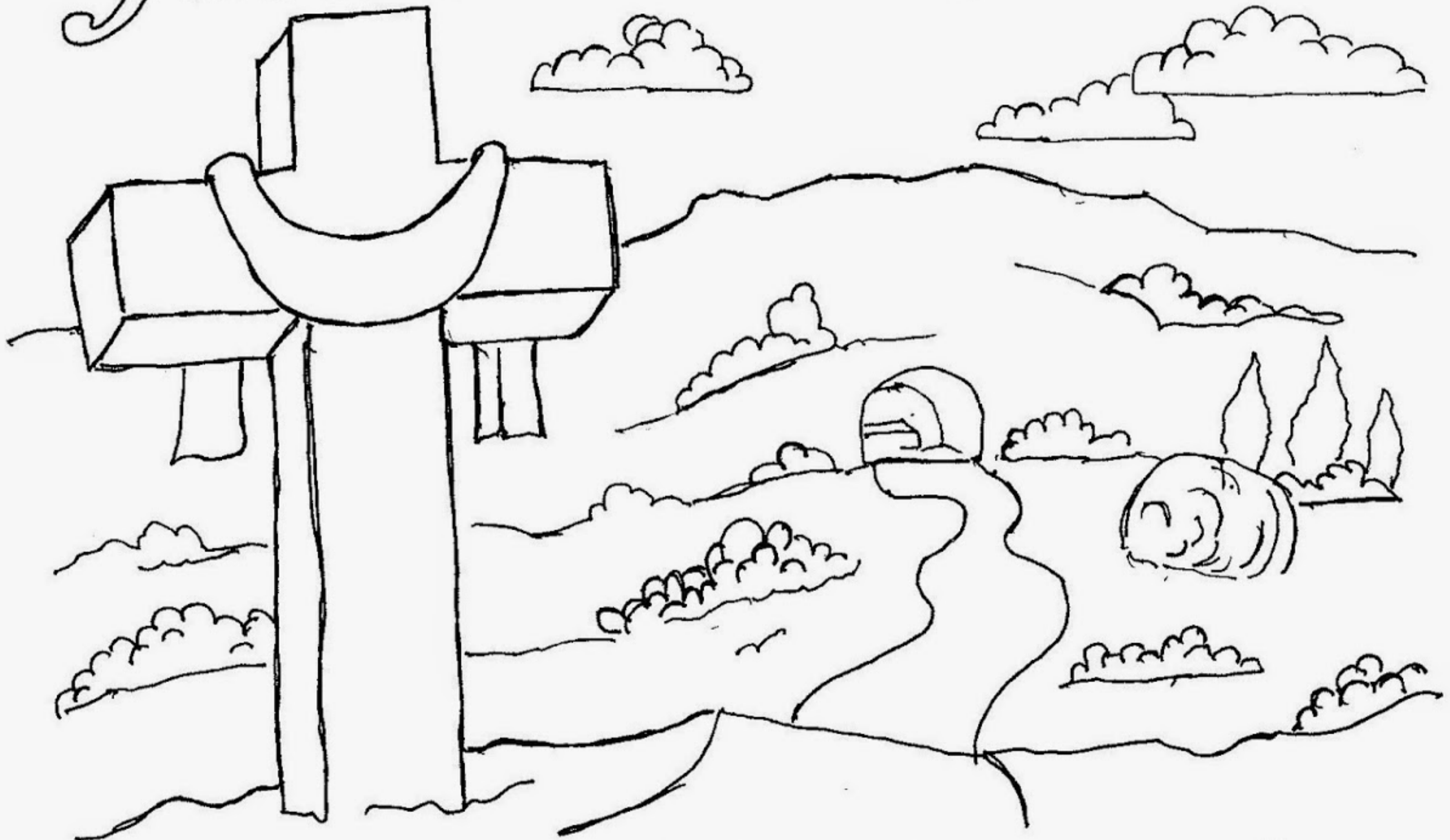
Jesus: Father, thank you for hearing me. You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me. (Shout) Lazarus, come out!

Narrator: And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth.

Jesus: Unwrap him and let him go!

JESUS SAID

I AM THE
RESURRECTION
AND THE LIFE



THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN ME
WILL LIVE

John 11:25

The Rich Man and Lazarus

In the grid below you will find the following words. Circle each word as you find it. The words can be backwards, forwards, vertical, horizontal or diagonal.

Lazarus	crumbs	sores	rich	angels
linen	poor	died	dogs	gate
covered	Hades	purple	Abraham	mercy
Moses	chasm	repent	torment	flame

C	C	H	B	D	L	L	A	Z	A	R	U	S
G	H	K	L	B	A	M	A	H	A	R	B	A
V	A	N	G	E	L	S	C	M	N	M	I	L
T	S	S	P	L	P	L	O	H	U	T	I	R
O	M	K	J	P	S	E	H	R	W	N	U	O
R	P	O	O	R	E	F	C	D	E	Q	W	E
M	K	D	I	U	S	R	I	N	N	S	X	V
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N	J	I	K	A	M	E	R	C	Y	O	N	R
T	P	D	E	B	A	A	H	S	E	D	A	H
T	T	T	N	E	P	E	R	Y	I	A	H	M
G	A	H	R	C	O	V	E	R	E	D	F	K
G	O	F	S	C	I	F	L	A	M	E	F	A