



Sunday of the Holy Ancestors

Study Guide - Level 2 (Grades 3–5 / Ages 8–10)

Today is the Sunday
of the Holy Ancestors

Lesson Order

- Opening Prayer
- Intro / Recap last week's lesson
- Review the scripture readings
- Review the hymns of the day
- Read front page of handout together
- Use study guide lesson and Q&A
- Complete handout activities
- Preview next week's lesson
- Closing Prayer

Tips & Hints

- Use as much or as little of the content in this study guide helping the students discover how the Byzantine Catholic Faith can be a part of their daily life.
- Use open-ended questions, encouraging young people to share their experiences or ideas, drawing connections to the topics of the day, strengthening their relationship with Jesus Christ and His holy Byzantine Catholic Faith.
- Questions, ideas, feedback, and suggestions can be directed to the publisher at orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com

✓ Goal

After completing this week's lesson, students should be able to articulate the following:

- How today's scripture readings and liturgical hymns apply to their life
- Understanding what God is expecting us to live as His followers and members of the Byzantine Catholic Faith
- How being part of the Byzantine Catholic Church gives us the tools and skills to live godly lives regardless of our circumstances
- Why they believe and follow Jesus Christ as Byzantine Catholic Christians

✂ Overview

We hear many names read in today's gospel, people who we know are the earthly ancestors of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, as the Son of God, always existed. When he was born of the Virgin Mary, He became part of human history, as recorded in the bible.

We are reminded in this reading that Jesus came to be our Savior. Saving us from what? Sin and death, which isolates us from God. It is through God's love that we are restored to a full relationship with God the Father.

That's because each of us, and every other person is precious in the eyes of God, worthy of His love.

We are called to bear God's love in our life, sharing what we have with those less fortunate, and offering kind words and a helping hand whenever we can - so that God's love can continue transforming the word and defeating the devil.

As we prepare for Christmas, we are called to be like Jesus, humble, loving, and kind to others - worshiping Him as our Lord and God.

📖 Apostolos / Epistle and Gospel Readings

Have one student read today's Apostolos/Epistle and another read the Gospel lesson.

Epistle/Apostol: Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

1. *What is the author of today's epistle/apostol talking about?*
2. *How does the message of this epistle apply to our lives?*

Possible Answers

- St. Paul talks about the various saints and figures of the Old Testament
- He explains that they had faith in God, becoming part of the history leading to Christ's birth
- The Epistle says the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses carried them through times of struggle
- We are recipients of God's blessings as members of the Church
- Even though we are born centuries after Christ lived on earth, we are still recipients of God's plan
- Like those in the Old Testament, we need to remain faithful to God when faced with attacks by the devil
- God provides for our needs

1. *What took place in today's lesson?*
2. *Why is this important for us living in the 21st century?*

Possible Answers

- The gospel tells of the ancestors of Jesus Christ: 42 generations from the first Patriarch, Abraham to Christ's birth of Mary
- The gospel explains what happened at the birth of Christ
- Christ's birth fulfilled a prophecy spoken long before His birth
- As Byzantine Catholic Christians, we are united through the Church to the people in the Old Testament
- Each of us plays an important role in God's plan
- We can pray to God that He will guide us to our role
- Christ's birth is wondrous because it enables us to encounter God

🎵 Hymnography

Have a student read the hymn(s) on the front page of the handout.

1. *What do the hymns teach us about today's commemoration?*
2. *How can the message of these hymns apply to our lives?*

Possible Answers

- Jesus Christ's earthly ancestors were faithful to God's promise
- With God's mercy, they were able to withstand horrible circumstances, even unto death
- These saints and holy people pray to God for us
- We play a valuable role in the Church
- We don't need to be famous or well known to be Byzantine Catholic Christians
- Christ's earthly ancestors can be examples for us for being faithful to God
- We glorify God in our hymns and prayers for being born of Mary

A Closer Look

Let's take a closer look at today's primary topic.

Opening Review

Today we hear a reading with a lot, lot, lot of names. How many?

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These are Jesus Christ's earthly ancestors. He had grandparents and many other relatives, through Mary, and His guardian, Joseph. This lesson starts by calling Jesus: "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." (Matt. 1:1)

The Evangelist Matthew tells us of Christ's earthly ancestors, and not all of them are wonderful. This reminds us they represent all of humanity, and God's love for humanity is generous towards everyone, not just a few people. The genealogy of Christ reminds us that *each of us* plays an important part in the life of the church today.

In the same way, Christ tells His disciples (written at the end of Matthew's gospel - 28:18-20) to 'go and...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.'

What Does This Mean for Us?

Matthew's entire gospel is for our understanding and benefit. We might someday be a missionary working with the Byzantine Catholic Christian Mission Center, or we might live an ordinary life in our town. Either way, we can choose to take Christ's words and live according to His teachings, being faithful to God like Jesus' earthly ancestors.

After the gospel reading lists all of the ancestors, it shifts to tell us Christ isn't just the Messiah because He has the right lineage or ancestry. The prophets spoke of Christ across many generations. One in particular, Isaiah, proclaims a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, "and they shall call his name Immanuel" and Matthew (1:23) quotes directing from Isaiah (7:14).

We can tell from today's reading that Christ's birth was not ordinary. God's plan took not one, two, or five generations, but forty-two generations!

Knowing that the birth of Christ was the result of God's plan over forty-two generations, we need to remember that God has a plan for us. We have free will to follow God so we align with His plan for our salvation. And if things don't go the way we think they should, we need to remember:

- We're not God, and don't have the perspective He does
- Our frame of reference is pretty small compared to God
- We might have to make some effort and have faith in God
- God will provide for our needs when He knows it's right for us and our salvation
- We have to be patient and focused on God, trusting that He will provide for our needs

We were created in God's image: to love, think, be creative, express compassion for others, and ultimately, be in communion with God.

While the human image was distorted through the sin of Adam and Eve, God's plan of Salvation was set in motion immediately, to restore that image.

Through Christ, we are united to each of those people who lived before His Incarnation, and also to the countless saints who have lived since then, and to all of the people who will come after us. By having faith in God, we can grow closer to Him and all of the saints.

Even if we sometimes don't feel God's presence, it's important to keep wanting to be with Him - so we can do the right thing and be with Him throughout our lives.

It's important to remember that the devil doesn't want us to be with God, so he will do whatever he can to distract us. Especially at this time of year.

It's easy to focus on presents, forgetting that the Eucharist and coming to Church are the more important on Christmas morning.

When we come together as a community of believers to worship and glorify God, we put presents, gifts, and parties in their right place - second to God's banquet set for us: the divine liturgy.

Wrap Up

As we draw closer to the Nativity of Our Lord this week, let us remember that Christ's birth was a miraculous event in our world, and it should also be the same in our own lives.

Christ's birth transforms the world, restoring it to the beauty of His creation in the Garden of Eden. For us, we come face to face with God through our prayers and in the divine liturgy. We also encounter God in the faces of everyone around us.

Since we're all children of God, formed in His image, we are called to share the love we receive from God with everyone around us. That includes our friends, family, strangers, even the kids at school who might not like us or are mean.

God's love is something we receive freely from God and it grows within us when we share it. The Nativity of Christ reminds us that God's love often takes time - even 42 generations! Yet, God will always be with us, because His plan is worth our time and effort.

What is God's plan for us? We are called to live according to His teachings, pray, fast, rejoice, come to church, and help those less fortunate.

When we come to church on Christmas to participate in the divine liturgy and receive the Eucharist, we receive the Holy Body and Blood into our bodies as spiritual nourishment.

Let this year's celebration of the feast inspire us to rejoice and give thanks to God for His mercy and love to us.



Discussion Questions

Choose from these possible questions to explore today's topic.

Question #1: Why is it important to know Christ is the descendant of all of these people?

Possible Answers:

- The reading connects the Old Testament with Jesus Christ
- It shows Christ isn't some random guy claiming to be the Son of God
- Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise God made concerning a Messiah, meaning He IS the Messiah

Question #2: Who are the important names in today's scripture reading?

Possible Answers:

- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Patriarchs)
- Judah (of the Twelve Tribes)
- Jesse (Father of King David)
- David, Solomon (Kings of Israel)
- Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the deportation to Babylon (587-539 BC)
- Joseph (the betrothed of the Virgin Mary)
- All of the names listed

Question #3: How is God present in our lives?

Possible Answers:

- Moments of love
- A feeling of peace
- Calm acceptance without anxiety
- Grace-filled moments of compassion
- A kind word, a hug, a smile
- Prayer to the Theotokos and saints
- Being at the liturgy
- Receiving the Eucharist
- When we forgive or repent

Question #4: How can we respond when we experience God's grace in our life?

Possible Answers:

- Give thanks
- Pray for ourselves and others
- Keep doing God's commandments
- See the joy in life
- Love others in a godly way
- Repent before God, forgive others
- Go to church, offer a candle in thanks, receive the Eucharist

Question #5: How can we faithfully trust God when things do not make sense?

Possible Answers:

- There might be a deeper meaning, we can pray to God for discernment
- We might be resistant or hesitant, we can pray to God for understanding and guidance
- Talk with our parents or priest for guidance when things are confusing or facing spiritual struggles

Question #6: How do the major Old Testament figures connect to one another and to us?

Possible Answers:

- They are earthly ancestors of Christ, we are members of the Church
- We can learn about them by reading the bible
- I heard their names but didn't realize they were important
- I can be inspired by their faith in God for when I have doubts or fears
- Praying to the saints helps me grow closer to them



Preview

Next Week

We continue the celebration of the Nativity by honoring St. Joseph the Betrothed, St. James, the Lord's brother, and St. David, the prophet and ancestor of Christ.

St. Joseph was faithful in very unusual circumstances, St. James was the son of St. Joseph and a devoted follower of Jesus, and St. David wrote the book of Psalms.

We have the choice to follow God with faith, knowing from the lives of these three saints, God has a very specific plan of salvation for each of us living in the 21st century.



On The Web

Homily on the Genealogy of Christ
(9:23 min)

<https://youtu.be/HpuHotcl1hc>

What Does the Name Jesus Mean?
<https://antiochpatriarchate.org/en/page/jesus-what-does-this-name-mean/2326/>

