

*Activities for Holy Saturday, Pascha and Bright Week
for Grades 4-6 and 7-9
Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America*

Introduction for the Teacher:

The Old Testament readings for Holy Saturday and Pascha remind us that the Resurrection of Our Lord is frequently prophesied in the Old Testament. These activities will help students understand how strongly that fact is emphasized in our Orthodox worship. The readings call us to prepare ourselves for the Resurrection during Great Lent and Holy Week, just as they called the people of Old Testament times to prepare themselves for the coming of the Savior their Scriptures promised.

The Department of Christian Education's newest Activity Book entitled *Saints and the Animals That Served Them* (dce.oca.org/page/activity-books) includes the life stories, with activities, icons, iconographic black-and-white images, maps, and journal questions, of two saints commemorated in April: Saint Artemon (13th) and Saint Mary of Egypt (17th). Study of these two saints can enrich your class's Lenten or Paschal experience.

For Bright Week and the weeks following, you might use the *Spring Resources* (dce.oca.org/assets/files/resources/book-of-acts.pdf) produced last year for 3 levels (grades 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12) It offers activities based on the Book of Acts, which is read in church during May.

For Grades 4-6:

Ezekiel and the Dry Bones

Materials:

- 2 sets of 11 small bone-shaped (like an open number 8) pieces of white paper. Each set should have a single word on each bone: **I will put my Spirit in you and you shall live**
- 2 plain white envelopes
- Markers, Easter stickers, Scotch tape, glue or paste—enough for 2 groups to use
- 2 sheets each of green and yellow construction paper, 12x18 or 9x12
- Copy for each student of “Ezekiel’s Vision of the Dry Bones” (dce.oca.org/assets/files/resources/56.pdf)
- Enlarged photo of a skeleton (not a scary one) displayed in the room
- Map (can be a page in an open book) showing the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah

Before students arrive, put each set of “bones” in an envelope and hide the envelopes in 2 separate places in the room. Display the skeleton where everyone can easily see it.

Procedure:

- When students arrive, begin with the Lord's Prayer.
- Point out the two kingdoms on the map.
- Tell students, *"Something very sad happened to the northern kingdom, Israel. The powerful empire of Assyria attacked their kingdom and took over. The Assyrians were very harsh rulers."*
- Read the story "Ezekiel's Vision of the Dry Bones" together, up to the end of the 6th paragraph (ending with the words "...into a great nation." Point out Judah and its capital Jerusalem on the map.
- Review the meaning of the word "exile" and ask students to identify people who today are in exile from their homes. Tell them that we pray during the Liturgy for the people of the Middle East, many of whom are Orthodox, who have been driven from their homes. Students may also name other people or groups, of course. Let them describe what it would feel like to be in exile. Ask, *"Do we sometimes feel lonely and sad, as those people might feel?"* Let students express their thoughts.
- Say, *"The story tells us that Ezekiel had many visions from God. Now we'll read about a special one. Before we read about it, look at the skeleton and tell me: can bones live by themselves? (No.) Let's see what God showed Ezekiel with some old, dry bones."*
- Finish reading the story together.
- Review the meaning of the word "prophesy" (This is a good time to review the fact that the last syllable of "prophesy" rhymes with "my" while the last syllable of the noun "prophecy" rhymes with "me".)
- Ask students to find the part of the story that tells us why we read about Ezekiel's vision as we prepare for the Resurrection of Our Lord. (The sentence in the 7th paragraph is "It reminds us that Jesus died and rose again from the dead, bringing us all new life.") Say, *"Ezekiel lived a long time before Jesus Christ came to be our Savior. But God was already telling His people that He planned for them to have a Savior who would bring them out of exile. The Savior would die, but He would rise from the dead. He would bring joy instead of sadness. He would give them a new, wonderful life that would never end."*
- Divide the class into 2 teams. Let each team choose yellow or green paper.
- Have each team hunt for an envelope. When the team finds an envelope, the members should arrange the "bone" words to form a promise God made. The promise is near the end of the story (the 11 words bolded in the "Materials" list above.)
- Teams should mount the words in order on their paper, and then can decorate it with the markers and stickers.
- Display the finished papers.
- Give students their copies of the story to take home.
- If you wish to, you can review the session by putting the following words from the story, with letters scrambled, on the board or display pad:
ryd ignivl nisk trabhe sebno nisovi scmleus.
Have students unscramble them and tell what part they have in the story
The words are:
dry living skin breath bones vision muscles
- Close with prayer.

For Grades 7-9

Jesus Christ in the Old Testament

Materials:

Bibles for each student or to share

Paper and pens/pencils

Enlarged photo of a skeleton (not a scary one) displayed where everyone can see it

Map (can be a page in a book) showing the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Copy for each student of the activity sheet (page 4)

Procedure:

- Open the session with the Lord's Prayer.
- Point out the skeleton and ask, "*When you look at a skeleton, are you seeing something alive?*" Of course the answer is no.
- Say, "*We're going to look at a passage in the Old Testament, from the words of the Prophet Ezekiel. In the passage he tells of a wonderful vision God gave him at a time when terrible things had happened to the people in Israel and Judah. (Indicate the map.) First the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrian Empire. later the Babylonian Empire conquered the southern kingdom of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem.*"
- Continue: *The people were taken away to exile in Babylonia, far from their homeland, far from the Temple where they worshipped, and with no escape from their pagan Babylonian conquerors. Let's read part of a psalm that tells us how they were feeling.* Read together Psalm 137/136, verses 1-5. Students will probably know that we sing this psalm in church.
- Continue: *Ezekiel was one of the exiles. He was a prophet who often reminded the people that they had betrayed and turned away from God, and that was why they had fallen into the hands of the Babylonians. But God made a promise to His people, through a vision He gave to Ezekiel. And it has to do with dead bones.* Read Ezekiel 37: 1-14 together. Ask, "*Why do you think we read about this vision in church as we prepare for Holy Saturday?*" Students should be able to relate the passage to the Resurrection of Christ and His passage from death to life. God promised a Savior who would not come just to "make life better" but to rise from the dead and defeat the power of death.
- Review with students the fact that a prophet is someone who tells people what God plans to do, or what He wants them to do. Point out that Ezekiel is not just a passive spectator in this encounter with God. He is the one who gives the prophecies to the wind, or breath, and to the bones. God invites us to work with Him.
- Give each student the Activity Sheet, and let them do *Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*. The matching answers are 1/c 2/e 3/d 4/b 5/a. Review together.
- Have students do *Cross Out the Category*. When all the "category" words are gone, the first line across will still have *burning, us*. 2nd line: *deliver*. 3rd line: *fiery, from*. 4th line: *furnace, the*. Students will be able to complete the sentence: "God is able to **deliver us from the burning fiery furnace**. (Daniel 3: 17—RSV. Note: The Orthodox Study Bible uses "save" rather than "deliver.")"
- Ask students to choose and try to remember one of the Old Testament passages they have looked at today as a little prayer to keep with them during the days of Pascha and beyond.
- Close with prayer.

Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament

After Jesus rose from the dead, He met two of His apostles on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-31). As they walk along together, the apostles tell Him that they have been disappointed. They had hoped that Jesus of Nazareth would be their Savior. But now, they say, He has been crucified and is dead. That, they seem to believe, is the end.

But Jesus answers them by saying they are “slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken.” Then He reminds them of what is in the Old Testament, explaining all the things that are written about Him. In other words, the Old Testament prepares us for the coming of Christ, and tells us what He will be like and what He will do. The Old Testament prepares us for the New Testament, where we will meet Jesus the Savior.

Read the following passages from the Old Testament, and see how they match things we know about Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Put the number of the Old Testament reading (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) on the line next to the New Testament description of Jesus it matches.

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| 1. Ezekiel 34: 11-16 | 4. Exodus 19: 10-11 |
| 2. Isaiah 50: 6-7 | 5. Zechariah 9: 9 |
| 3. Isaiah 35: 4-6 | |

- a. Jesus enters Jerusalem on a young foal _____
- b. Jesus will rise on the third day _____
- c. Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd _____
- d. Jesus Christ will do miracles of healing _____
- e. Though He suffers, Jesus can rely on His Father _____

Cross Out the Categories

Daniel is another prophet of the Old Testament. He also was taken to Babylonia, but kept his faith strong, even when tempted with rich food and a high position in the Babylonian court. Daniel fearlessly told the Babylonian king about something that God—only God—can do.

Cross out all the words below that fit in these categories: ANIMALS, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, VEHICLES, CONTAINERS. When you have crossed them out you will have 7 words left. Look up Daniel 3: 17 and arrange those words to complete the sentence you will find there.

JAGUAR BOX BURNING TRUMPET US ANTELOPE PIANO TRACTOR
TRAILER BADGER DELIVER CLARINET MOOSE TRUNK CELLO
PORCUPINE FIERY AMBULANCE FROM LOCKER SNOWMOBILE
OBOE FURNACE BAG VAULT ZEBRA VIOLIN BASKET THE HYENA

Complete the sentence: God is able to