



# Sunday of the Holy Ancestors

Study Guide - Level 3 (Grades 6–8 / Ages 11–13)

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](mailto: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, and when He came into this world, born of the Virgin Mary, His earthly life was woven into the history of humanity as recorded in the bible.

We are reminded in this reading that Christ is the descendant of Abraham, David, and many other people - good and bad, and at the fullness of time - according to God's plan. Yet each person is precious in the eyes of God, worthy of His love.

In the same way, we were born at an appointed time according to God's wisdom and love. We're part of His plan designed for us to participate in the glory and majesty of His Kingdom for all eternity.

We might experience doubt or confusion regarding of what to do in life, yet having faith in God through prayer and participating in the life of the Church can help us know what to do.

Faith in God takes effort and a willingness to humble ourselves before Him, knowing that God does provide what we need for salvation through His Son: Jesus Christ.

## 📖 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 reviews the lives and faith of the saints and figures in the Old Testament
- Their faith can inspire us to be devoted to God in our own lives
- Abraham and his heirs endured struggles for being faithful to God, we will encounter the same as Byzantine Catholic Christians
- God's promise of Salvation is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ
- We are recipients of God's blessings as members of the Church
- We live centuries after Christ, and are still recipients of God's love
- God provides for our needs and invites us to accept His promise in love

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

### Possible Answers

- The gospel tells of the 42 generations from the first Patriarch, Abraham to Jesus Christ being born of Mary
- The gospel explains what happened at the birth of Christ: Joseph, faced with the challenge of Mary's sudden pregnancy, was assured by an angel that the child would be called Jesus, and would save people from their sins
- Christ's birth fulfilled a prophecy spoken long before His birth
- Obedience to God helps us live godly lives
- As Christians, each of us plays an important role in God's plan
- We can pray to God that He will guide us to live and do as He commands us

## 🎵 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

- The many figures of the Old Testament (Jesus' earthly ancestors) were faithful to God's promise
- These saints and holy people pray to God for us
- The three holy youths (Ananiah, Azariah, and Mishael) were obedient to God, rejecting the worship of earthly idols
- The Theotokos fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to the ancient cities of Bethlehem and Ephratha
- We don't need to be famous or well known to be Christians
- 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**

The gospel reading we heard in church today is always read on the Sunday before Christmas. It provides us with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, his earthly ancestors. While it sounds like a list of weird and hard to pronounce names of people who lived a long time ago, there is a reason we hear this reading.

The gospel of St. Matthew begins with these very important words about our Lord, calling Him: “the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” (Matt. 1:1) Matthew’s gospel intends to inform the people of Israel that the Messiah has come, encouraging them to follow Jesus Christ!

### **What Does This Mean For Us?**

This message is also for us, because we need to know and understand that Jesus was foretold in the Old Testament and became human for our salvation. He is the only person ever born to die (The rest of us die because of sin and death).

Matthew begins his gospel by presenting Jesus’ earthly ancestry showing that his lineage leads back to the Patriarch Abraham. In this reading, we hear not only the major figures of the Old Testament, but even those who were murderers (David), a prostitute (Rahab), and non-Jews (Ruth). Christ’s earthly ancestors aren’t all wonderful - but they represent all of humanity, and God’s love for humanity is generous towards everyone, not just a few people.

It is no accident all of these figures were related, and we are adopted into their family as Byzantine Catholic Christians. 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, the **Great Commission** given by Christ to His disciples at the end of Matthew’s gospel (28:18-20), is given to each of us as part of our responsibility as Christians:

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore 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. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

Matthew’s entire gospel is for our understanding and benefit. We might someday be a missionary working with the Catholic Charities, or we might live an ordinary life, either way, we can still take Christ’s words and remember how each of Jesus’ earthly ancestors were faithful to God in their lives and contributed to His plan of Salvation.

Their lives and experiences made it possible for Christ to be born in the world. What can we do to fulfill the Great Commission?

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. This means many generations lived, knowing of the promise, but never able to witness the prophecy being fulfilled. There were probably some who were unaware of their role in it!

In our own lives, God is working wonders. We might not always see them, but God is present and with us. Each of us has a responsibility to be faithful to God, learning all we can through the Church to be the best possible Byzantine Catholic Christian we can be in our daily life.

God’s relationship with each of us is an expression of His love. He has consistently expressed His love for creation since the first moments in the Garden of Eden. 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 in each of us. The Old Testament isn’t a historical account of the Hebrew people, but a preparation for Christ’s earthly ministry, preparing the people of God to know and receive the Son of God.

The crucifixion of Christ redeems humanity from the curse of Satan. While the earthly ancestors of Christ lived before the crucifixion, we exist on the other side of the crucifixion and resurrection. 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 the Church was established, so that we can join them as Christ’s followers.

In our own lives, God is present, whether we feel it or not because God acts in His way, at His time, to provide what we need. When we get distracted or lose focus on God, we become anxious, worried, scared, impatient or try to control situations through force or manipulation.

These are deceptions from the devil, doing his best to separate us from God. We need to redirect our life through patience and prayer to nurture that relationship with God, being faithful, and ready to respond to His presence in our lives.

Our faithfulness to God begins with ongoing learning through the Church. As we grow closer to God, our faith and lives are centered on Christ and this is something we will one day pass along to future generations - both in our family and in our community.

### **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 can only be explained through the love and grace of God. This is our opportunity to approach and kneel before the icon of the Nativity, glorifying God for His great mercy and love.

As we approach the chalice to receive the Eucharist on Christmas, let us give thanks to God for His love and mercy towards us - the greatest gift we can ever receive on Christmas.

Sure the presents, gifts, and time with family and friends are enjoyable - but if they become the focus of our Christmas, at the expense of coming to liturgy, then what does that say about our relationship with God? Let’s add our voices to the angels and saints praising God, giving thanks to Him.



## 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:** Knowing that the birth of Christ was the result of God's plan over forty-two generations, how should we react when something doesn't happen for us in the amount of time we expect?

**Possible Answers:**

- 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

**Question #4:** What's at the center of the timeline of human history?

**Possible Answers:**

- The crucifixion
- The death and resurrection of Christ
- The life of Jesus Christ

**Question #5:** 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 #6:** 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 #7:** 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 #7:** How can the Nativity of Christ remind us of the power of inexplicable wonder?

**Possible Answers:**

- If we focus only our lives, we forget God is present
- Our participation in the life of the Church is vital for us to be part of something bigger - God's plan
- It's more than a coincidence that 42 generations, wise men from Persia, shepherds, and a Roman census all took place in exactly the right way for Christ to be born in Bethlehem
- God became human for us



## 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

Learn more about this week's topics on the web:

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

<https://youtu.be/HpuHotcl1hc>

**About the Sunday of the Holy Ancestors**  
<http://ww1.antiochian.org/node/18658>

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

**Christ's Family - Our Family**  
<https://www.goarch.org/-/christ-s-family-our-family>

