

Session Seven -Pascha: O Death Where is Your Sting?

Main Ideas: Focus on the events of the Resurrection, the evidence provided to us in the Bible, and connections to the services we celebrate on Pascha.

Supplies needed: Bibles, Participant Workbooks for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.)

(15 minutes) Warm up activity- have students think about what they can remember from an event in the last week or two- the goal of this activity is to illustrate the fact that multiple people can be eyewitnesses to an event, but not have the exact same memory of it, so ideally, they would describe an event that they all attended. For example, ask them to tell you what happened at coffee hour the previous Sunday. Students can jot down a few things then each tell their 30 second version of “What happened at Coffee hour.” The goal is for students to see that even though they were all present, they participated differently and saw things differently from one another.

(20 minutes) Have students take turns reading the following workbook sections out loud, then break them up into four groups. Each group should read one of the Gospel readings listed and answer the questions that follow based on only their reading. When everyone has finished, have each group share their answers, while the other groups add any missing details to their answers.

Christ IS Risen! In today’s Session we will focus on Pascha, the day of Christ’s glorious Resurrection. We’ll learn a little bit about what happened on that day many centuries ago, how we celebrate it today, and some of the traditions that we follow.

Christ IS Risen!



Since this phrase is our theme for the year, and Pascha is the reason that we say it, let’s take a closer look at its meaning. In our last Session, we compared the Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah to what actually happened during Jesus’s crucifixion and burial to see that He really was the One who the prophets said would be coming. He really is Christ. Now let’s look at the last part of the phrase- Risen! In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul talks to those who are having trouble believing that Jesus rose from the dead, and that He raised those who had been waiting in Hades with Him. St. Paul reminds them that although he didn’t witness the crucifixion himself, he spoke with Jesus on the road to Damascus after He had risen from the dead. He heard multiple stories from the disciples about what they had seen and he says that the people in Corinth can go and ask them. *“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are all men the most pitiable (1Cor. 15:17-19).”* Do you know what futile means? It means that there is no point. St. Paul

explains to the people in Corinth that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then Hades wasn't defeated, and Heaven wasn't opened.

The four Gospel stories of Jesus's Crucifixion and Resurrection are sort of like witness statements from people who were there, or heard the stories from people who were. In your warm up activity you talked about the fact that each individual person will remember an event differently from all of the other individuals who were present, but we can still use the information to create a complete picture of what happened. Since we've already seen that it was really Christ, let's use the Gospels to see that He is truly risen. What questions might the Corinthians have had? Perhaps who was the first to find out that Christ had risen from the dead? And what did they find, if Christ's body wasn't there? How did other people find out? Are they sure He actually rose from the dead?

The four Gospel readings that tell us about this time are:

John 20: 1-18

Luke 24: 1-12

Mark 16: 1-12

Matthew 28: 1-9

Who was the first to find out that Christ was no longer in the tomb?

[John- Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb and sees that the stone is rolled away; she goes and gets Simon Peter and John himself \(they may not realize that John refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved\); when she tells them the stone has been moved, she says "we" don't know where they put Jesus so there may have been other women with her.](#)

[Luke- at first it just says the women who had come from Galilee, but later names Mary Magdalene, Joanne, Mary the mother of James and other women; See the footnotes in the Orthodox Studet Bible, it may have been Mary the Mother of God](#)

[Mark- Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother of James^^ and Salome,](#)

[Matthew- Mary Magdelne, "the other Mary"](#)

If Jesus's body wasn't there, what did they find?

[John- they find the cloths that were used to wrap Jesus's body.](#)

[Luke- two men, angels who asked them why they were looking for someone dead; they reminded the women that Jesus had told them that He would rise again.](#)

[Mark- an angel who told them to go to Galilee, Jesus had risen and would meet them there](#)

[Matthew-There was an earthquake and an angel appeared to them, rolling away the stone; he tells them to come and see the place where Jesus was then sends them to tell their friends](#)

How did other people find out about Jesus's Resurrection?

John- Mary saw Jesus who told her to go and tell the disciples; she did as she was told

Luke- the women went and told the disciples, but they didn't really believe them; Peter did go to look for himself and others followed him

Mark- In this version, the women tell no one because they are scared.

Matthew- The angel told them women to tell their friends, and they did

How do they know that He actually rose from the dead?

John- Jesus appeared to Mary. She didn't recognize Him at first, but then tries to hug Him. He tells her that things aren't exactly as they were before, but she recognizes Him as her friend and teacher

Luke- The cloths that they used to wrap Jesus's body were still there.

Mark- an angel told them and they could see the cloths

Matthew- the angel tells them to come and see the place where Jesus had been so they could see that it was empty; he told them Jesus would meet them in Galilee and they saw Him on their way.



“Before the dawn, Mary and the women came and found the stone rolled away from the tomb. They heard the angelic voice, “Why do you seek among the dead as a man the One who is Everlasting Light? Behold the cloths in the grave! Go and proclaim to the world: The Lord is risen! He has slain death, as He is the Son of God, saving the race of men.”

-Hypakoe on Great and Holy Pascha

(15-20 minutes) Have students read the following text. If possible, have audio available so that they can listen to a priest read St. John's sermon out loud (Many parishes have uploaded videos of their priest reading the sermon on YouTube, at a minimum you could play one of these through someone's phone) . If you do not have audio, read the sermon aloud for the youth. The students may not understand every single part, but hearing it read out loud with a passionate voice is very compelling on its own.

Yesterday I was Crucified with Him, Today I am Glorified with Him!

Like many of the Holy Week services we learned about, there are many ways in which we celebrate the Resurrection as if we are right there. We venerate the shroud/plaschanitsa one last time as we enter the church because during the first service of Nocturns (Midnight Office), the priest comes to the tomb and removes Jesus's body to show that it is no longer in the tomb. Then the church is in complete darkness. The Hypakoe which is one of the hymns from the Matins service says that the women came to the tomb “before the dawn.” Most churches begin these services around Midnight as we move from Saturday night to Sunday morning. Some begin very early in the morning on Sunday before the dawn, just like the women. . From the total darkness that reminds us of the darkness of death before Jesus came to save

us, the priest brings out his candles, and everyone else spreads the light, just like Christ, throughout the church. We make one more procession, this time as if we are the women going to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. Then we proclaim that we too know that Jesus IS Risen and follow with Matins and Divine Liturgy. Many parishes also have Agape Vespers service around noon on Sunday to continue the celebration.

The Paschal Sermon

On this, the day of the Resurrection, every Orthodox Church hears the sermon of St John Chrysostom. St. John begins by telling us that everyone, even if they aren't as prepared as they should be, everyone who wants to join in this holiest of days is welcome and encouraged to attend. It is one of the most moving moments! Listen as St. John interrogates the devil, challenging him, and celebrating Jesus's victory over death.

The Catechetical Sermon of St. John Chrysostom is read during Matins of Pascha.

If any man be devout and love God, let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast. If any man be a wise servant, let him rejoicing enter into the joy of his Lord. If any have labored long in fasting, let him now receive his recompense. If any have wrought from the first hour, let him today receive his just reward. If any have come at the third hour, let him with thankfulness keep the feast. If any have arrived at the sixth hour, let him have no misgivings; because he shall in nowise be deprived thereof. If any have delayed until the ninth hour, let him draw near, fearing nothing. If any have tarried even until the eleventh hour, let him, also, be not alarmed at his tardiness; for the Lord, who is jealous of his honor, will accept the last even as the first; he gives rest unto him who comes at the eleventh hour, even as unto him who has wrought from the first hour.

And he shows mercy upon the last, and cares for the first; and to the one he gives, and upon the other he bestows gifts. And he both accepts the deeds, and welcomes the intention, and honors the acts and praises the offering. Wherefore, enter you all into the joy of your Lord; and receive your reward, both the first, and likewise the second. You rich and poor together, hold high festival. You sober and you heedless, honor the day. Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have disregarded the fast. The table is full-laden; feast ye all sumptuously. The calf is fatted; let no one go hungry away.

Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: Receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness. let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shown forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it. By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive. He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh. And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry: Hell, said he, was embittered, when it encountered Thee in the lower regions. It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It was embittered, for it was overthrown. It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains. It took a

body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered Heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.

Icon of the Resurrection

Icons incorporate many symbols that add layers of meaning. Many of the early Christians were unable to read and write, and in some cases it was illegal to practice Christianity as well. Being able to receive information about a particular saint or feast day from an icon helped people to learn and grow in their faith. Take a look at an icon of the Resurrection and with the help of your teacher or parish priest, record the meaning of each of the symbols below. Notice that not all icons will include all of these elements, and you may even want to look at a few different ones in your church, in your home, and in this book.

The broken doors and chains:

The layers of blue surrounding Christ:

Adam and Eve:

St. John the Baptist (the Forerunner):

Other people such as Abel, King David, King Solomon, etc:

The figure imprisoned under Christ:

What else do you notice about this icon?

Why do you think this icon is placed in the casket when a person falls asleep in the Lord?

This icon of the Resurrection can be seen behind the altar of the St. Thomas Chapel at All Saints Camp.

Suggested Additional Activity: Show youth the icon of the Resurrection (consider going into the church to do this in your parish has an icon large enough/close enough to see details). Explain the various elements of the icon, or give youth some information about one of the symbols in the icon and ask them to share what they learned with the group- this could also be a task assigned as homework at the end of the previous Session so that youth come prepared to share their symbol. (Heaven Meets Earth: Celebrating Pascha and the Twelve Feasts by John Kosmas Skinas contains a thorough and accessible explanation of the icon on page 38)

