

## Lesson 8: Ezekiel: Vision of Hope

### AIM:

**General:** 1) To give a brief sketch of the period of exile- the emergence of the 'synagogue' and the recording of scripture.

2) To introduce Ezekiel and his 3-fold message of hope-

The people would receive new life (The dry bones come to life)

The Lord would be their shepherd.

The temple would be restored. (The stream from the temple)

3) To help the children discover that these visions were finally fulfilled by Jesus-

a) He gave us the Holy Spirit.

b) He became our Shepherd.

c) He is present and living in the Blessed Sacrament and in us- living temples.

**Personal:** To renew the faith of the children in the living presence of God, specially in the Eucharist.

**Texts:** Ezekiel 37 : 1 - 14; 34 : 11 - 15; 47 : 1 - 12

Acts 2:1- 4; John 10 : 11-16; 1 Cor 3 : 16, 17

### STARTER: [10 mins]

Teacher: Close your eyes and remember one time when you were very sad, depressed and felt there was no hope for you. Picture the scene, how you felt (2mins silence)

Now share this experience with your neighbour and listen to his/her experience...

*(After this, ask a few students to share with the whole class. Bring out - - - )*

All of us have had moments of depression, a feeling of being alone ...Jesus too expressed this deep feeling of sorrow on the cross, when he cried out 'My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?' It's not that Jesus lost his faith, but we could see his emotional suffering.

The Jews were feeling like this during their Babylonian exile. All their hopes were dashed, their pride gone. They had no temple, even, to worship and offer sacrifice

### INPUT: [15 mins]

1. What did the Jews do in this situation?

⇒ Some of them just gave up their Jewish identity and took on Babylonian ways...

⇒ But some began to long for God...they thought about their past and present condition and they turned back to God. (Like when you fail in a subject, you start thinking... realise your mistake, and decide to study properly in future)

⇒ They began to gather every Sabbath, read God's word, study it and pray. These places of study came to be known as 'synagogues.' Do you know of any Synagogue in Pune? [Lal Deval' on Synagogue Street]

⇒ Scribes also began to write down God's word, which was mainly oral before and so we have the beginnings of the Bible (Old Testament) being formed into books.

2. In this situation God sent the prophet Ezekiel who was also deported to Babylon along with the all the others. Ezekiel had some very interesting visions- these were visions which gave new hope to the people...like light shining in darkness

**ACTIVITY:** [20mins]

Divide the children into groups of 4 and distribute one activity sheet 'Visions of Hope' per group. Ask them to follow the instructions-

- i. Read the first passage aloud:
- ii. Discuss and write down (in the space given) what hope the Jews in exile must have experienced.
- iii. Read the New Testament passage:
- iv. Discuss and write down in what way we experience what the vision promised.

Ask them to complete one vision at a time: not all 3 simultaneously.

After the groups have finished, have a class summery on what has been discussed. Bring out-

1. Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones must have made the Jews realise that God was going to restore them; build them up and give them new strength as a nation.  
For us the 'wind' or 'breath' is a sign of the Holy Spirit It is He who can change us and give us power to live new lives when we have no hope.
2. The prophesy of the Good Shepherd must have made the people hope that they would return one day to Israel with God's help. For us, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. In our present life he guides us, as a shepherd takes care of his helpless sheep... and one day, he will lead us to Heaven, the new Jerusalem.
3. The vision of the life-giving stream coming out of the Temple, must have given the Jews hope that one day their Temple would be restored and God would be present there- and bless them.  
For us, there is a new temple- our own bodies, in which God dwells. We don't have to travel far to meet God He is in our hearts!

**PRAYER:** [15mins] (Take the students to the Church or chapel, Bring them before the Blessed Sacrament)

There is another fulfilment of Ezekiel's vision of the river in the Temple This is God's real presence with us in the Church...in the Blessed Sacrament.

Many people have received great - blessings by just sitting in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. One sister in Pune itself was suffering from cancer She used to spend hours just sitting here before Jesus. She said his presence was like healing rays flowing through her. The doctors were amazed to find her completely healed. Mother Teresa too would spend hours in this same place- and she got all the strength and love she needed to do her great work

Just sit now in the presence of Jesus. Forget about everyone else for a while. Be conscious of His love- his eyes on you...his loving hands blessing you... Let Him fill you and heal you...

*(Let the children spend 5 – 10mins thus)*

**SING SOFTLY-** Jesus, What A Wonder You Are.