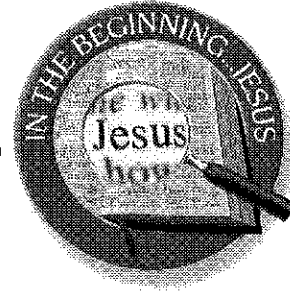


In the Beginning...Jesus



Lesson 30

The Day of the Lord's Coming

Themes:

- More than 400 years separates the events of the Old and New Testaments.
- God promised to send a messenger to prepare the way for the coming King.
- John the Baptist was born in fulfillment of God's promise.
- God is faithful to all His promises.

Scripture:

Zechariah 9:9; Malachi 3:1a; 4:5-6a; Luke 1:13-14, 16-17, 57, 60b

Memory Verse:

John 1:11 (and review verses 1-10)

Visuals for Lesson:

- Bible.
- *In the Beginning...Jesus* poster.
- Resource Packet:
 - Timeline (1st PREDICTION—God's people return to Jerusalem; from previous lesson)—Display the timeline on a wall of your classroom.
 - GOD—MAN visual (from previous lessons)
 - GOD'S ANOINTED ONE =THE MESSIAH (from previous lesson).
 - GOD'S PLAN (from previous lessons).
 - ZECHARIAH'S PREDICTION and MALACHI'S PREDICTION.
 - MORE THAN 400 YEARS, GREECE, and ROME.
 - ANGEL+OLD WOMAN+NO TALKING.
 - JOHN: GOD'S MESSENGER IS BORN.
 - JESUS IS THE KEY visual (from previous lessons).
 - Bible Clue Card #34
- Magnifying glass (for use in reading the clue card).
- Approximately 400 pages of copy paper.
- Tape.

Lesson

Display the timeline that was formed during Lesson 29 (the one that begins with 1ST **PREDICTION**). Remind the children that in our last lesson we learned how God chose King Cyrus of Persia to order the re-building of Jerusalem and the temple, and to set the captive people of Judah free. In the Bible, the book of Ezra tells about the re-building of the temple, and the book of Nehemiah tells about the re-building of the ruined walls of Jerusalem. After the people of Judah re-built the temple, the priests began to offer sacrifices again. The people could now worship God in the temple again. But things were not the same as they had been in the time of kings David and Solomon. The new temple was not as beautiful as the first one. And something very special was missing—the Ark of the Covenant. It had been lost (and probably destroyed) when the first temple was destroyed.

Point to **CAPTIVES** on the **GOD—MAN** visual. *We also learned that, in an important way, God's people were still captives. What were they captives of? [Their sin.] What prediction did we learn about in the last lesson that would free God's people from captivity to sin? [A special Man. God's Anointed One. The Messiah.]* **Display GOD'S ANOINTED=THE MESSIAH.**

Something else was very different also. Even though God's people were now back in Jerusalem, they were no longer great in number or in power. They were a small, weak group of people.

Display GOD'S PLAN. *Does it seem as if God has been faithful in keeping the promise He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Does it seem as if the people of Israel are still God's treasured possession? And what else is missing? (Point to **NO KING** on the **CAPTIVES** visual.) Didn't God make a promise to David that his throne would last forever? Where is the promised King?*

Display Bible Clue Card #34. Choose a child to insert the card behind the red paper of the **JESUS IS THE KEY** visual to reveal:

*Scripture: Zechariah 9:9
Clue under Window # 21*

Have the children turn to **Zechariah 9:9**. Before reading the text, explain to the children that Zechariah was God's prophet. God sent him to give messages to the people who had returned to Jerusalem.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Who is coming to Jerusalem? Their King! What word does the Bible use to describe this King? [Righteous.] What does He have with Him? [Salvation.] Is this good news for God's people? Has God remembered His promise He made a long time ago? How will they recognize this new King?

Open Window #21 to reveal: **A KING ON A DONKEY.**

Point out that even though God's people were now back in their land and were now able to worship again in their temple, they were missing their King—they were still being ruled by a king of another nation. But God is faithful. He hadn't forgotten His promises. God is going to send them their King!

So God's people waited and waited, but no King arrived. They looked for their King, but He didn't come. And God sent another prophet named Malachi to His people. He had a very special announcement for God's people—another prediction from God.

Read **Malachi 3:1a**:

Behold, I send My messenger and he will prepare the way before Me.

Who will God send to prepare the way before He comes? [God's messenger.] What will this messenger do? [Prepare the way.] What do you think that means? [Allow the children to respond.]

Choose children to read **4:5-6a** for a further description of this messenger:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers.

Explain that this messenger is going to be someone like the prophet Elijah. He will prepare the way for the coming King by preparing the hearts of the people.

God has a special way of describing what the coming of the King will be like. What is it? [The great and awesome day of the Lord.] Do you think God's people would look forward to something great and awesome? Would it be something you would want to happen very soon?

Illustration: Hold your Bible up and hold it open on the last page of the book of Malachi. Tell the children that you are going to demonstrate how long God's people waited after hearing Malachi's prediction. As you do this, place the corresponding number of pieces of paper on top of your open Bible.

God's people waited one year, then two years, then three years, and

even 10 years—no messenger came to prepare the way for the King.

They waited 20 years, then 30 years, then 50 years—but no messenger and no King.

They waited 80 years, then 100 years, even 200 years—but still no messenger and no King.

They waited 300 years, then 400 long years—but still no messenger and no King. Where was the messenger? Where was their King?

Explain that in all this time, it appeared that God was silent—He sent no new prophets and gave His people no new predictions. It might have even seemed as if God had disappeared. On the timeline tape **ZECHARIAH'S PREDICTION** and **MALACHI'S PREDICTION** so the timeline will look like this:

1st PREDICTION: King Cyrus will re-build Jerusalem and the temple and free the captives.	2nd PREDICTION: God will send His anointed one, the Messiah.	Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed.	Judah is taken into captivity in Babylon.	Babylon is defeated by Persia— Cyrus becomes king of Persia.	King Cyrus orders Jerusalem and the temple to be re-built.	God's people return to Jerusalem.	ZECHARIAH'S PREDICTION: A King will come riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.	MALACHI'S PREDICTION: God will send His messenger.
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Have the children turn to

the **last page of the book of Malachi** in their Bibles. How many pages separate the end of the book of Malachi from the first page of the book of Matthew in their Bibles? But in reality about how many years separate the events described in the two books? **Display MORE THAN 400 YEARS** and tape it after **MALACHI'S PREDICTION** on the timeline, and comment:

*God did send Israel some kings during these 400 years. **Display GREECE** and tape it in the lower left corner of **MORE THAN 400 YEARS**. **Display ROME** and tape it in the lower right corner of the same sign. These rulers were from enemy nations—not the King God had promised to David and His people.*

How might God's people have felt about this? Do you think some of them started to doubt God? Why might they? What should they have remembered? Can you think of another time when God seemed slow in keeping His promise? Do you remember a time when Abraham and Sarah had to wait and wait for God to fulfill His promise? [The birth of Isaac.] Did God keep His promise?

Explain that some of God's people did begin to doubt God's promise. Some of the Jewish people even decided they were better off living with the other nations and becoming like them. Some of the Jewish people kept working at keeping God's law, thinking that maybe if they just tried harder, God would send them the promised messenger and their King. But a few people continued to believe that somehow and in some way, God would do exactly as He promised. They had faith in God because they knew He is faithful to all of His promises.

So more than 400 years later something amazing happened. Here are some clues:

Display ANGEL+OLD WOMAN+NO TALKING.

What do these clues point to? [Allow the children to guess.]

Point out that the clues describe something that happened to a priest named Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth. They had a problem similar to Abraham and Sarah. They had no children, and they were now too old to have a baby. While he was serving in the temple, an angel appeared to Zechariah with a very special message from God.

Have the children turn to **Luke 1:13-14, 16-17:**

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth."

Why will many people rejoice at his birth?

"And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

Does this message sound familiar? Where did we hear it before? [From Malachi.] Do you think this might have been hard for Zechariah to believe? Why?

Point out that Zechariah did have a hard time believing that the messenger God had promised more than 400 years ago could be born to him and Elizabeth in their old age. Because he doubted this, the angel told him he would be speechless until the baby was born. Did God keep His promise?

Choose a child to read **Luke 1:57:**

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son.

Read verse **60b**:

But his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John."

Display JOHN: GOD'S MESSENGER IS BORN and tape it to the right of **MORE THAN 400 YEARS** on the timeline.

Application

- **WORKBOOK**—Have the children turn to Lesson 30 in their workbooks. In the notebook section have them write the missing words to complete today's clue. Have the children turn to **Zechariah 9:9**. What does Zechariah say this King has? [Salvation.] What is salvation and why do God's people need it? Do you think God's people were excited about this news? Do you think they might have been expecting this King to come soon? Why? Who is Zechariah speaking about in this verse? What has been revealed to us that was a mystery to them? How has Jesus brought salvation to God's people? Do you need this salvation?
- **WORKBOOK**—Read the prediction in **Malachi 3:1a and 4:5-6a**. Read the prediction in **Luke 1:16-17**. Does the predicted baby in Luke match the description of the predicted messenger in Malachi? Why? Have the children fill in the answers on their workbook page. Why do you think Zechariah (the priest in Luke) had a hard time believing the angel's message?
- Read **Zechariah 9:9**. How does the last part of verse 9 describe this King? [Humble and riding on a donkey.] Is there anything unusual about this? Are great kings usually humble people? Do great kings ride on donkeys? Can you think of a place in the Bible where this prediction was proven to be correct? [Jesus coming into Jerusalem on a donkey.] Did Jesus look like a King at the time? Why not? What was he going to do? Read and discuss **Philippians 2:8-11**.
- Have the children open their Bibles to the **last chapter of Malachi**. Point out that this is the last page of what we call the Old Testament. Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets. Point out that after the words of Malachi were written, the Bible was "silent" for more than 400 years. Quickly review all of the picture clues presented in our study so far. Remind the children that the people of Israel now had all of these clues (and many others we have not presented), but they still didn't understand all of them. But they could understand that God was going to send them a great King. So they waited and waited. Ask the children how they respond

to waiting for something a long time, like a promise of a special thing. Suppose their parents tell them they will be going on a special vacation six months from now—they will travel somewhere really great on an airplane. What if the next day, week, and month passes, and their parents never even mention the trip again and won't even answer questions about it? Can the children imagine what this would feel like? Would they get discouraged? Would they begin to have doubts? Would they begin to forget about it? Would they get angry with their parents? *If your parents have always been good and trustworthy, should you trust them now also? As you look back through the Old Testament, has God proven Himself to always be good and trustworthy? Is He the same God today? Do you trust Him with all the things that happen—or don't happen—in your life?*

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