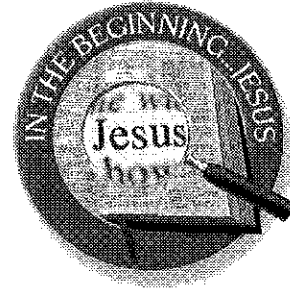


In the Beginning...Jesus



Lesson 20

The Tabernacle, Priests, and Sacrifices

Themes:

- God instructed Israel about how they were to worship Him in the tabernacle.
- The holy God desires to dwell with His people.
- God chose priests to be mediators between God and His sinful people.
- God commanded the priests to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of their own sins and the sins of the people.
- On the Day of Atonement, the one high priest could enter the Most Holy Place.

Scripture:

Portions of Exodus 25-30 and Leviticus 16

Memory Verse:

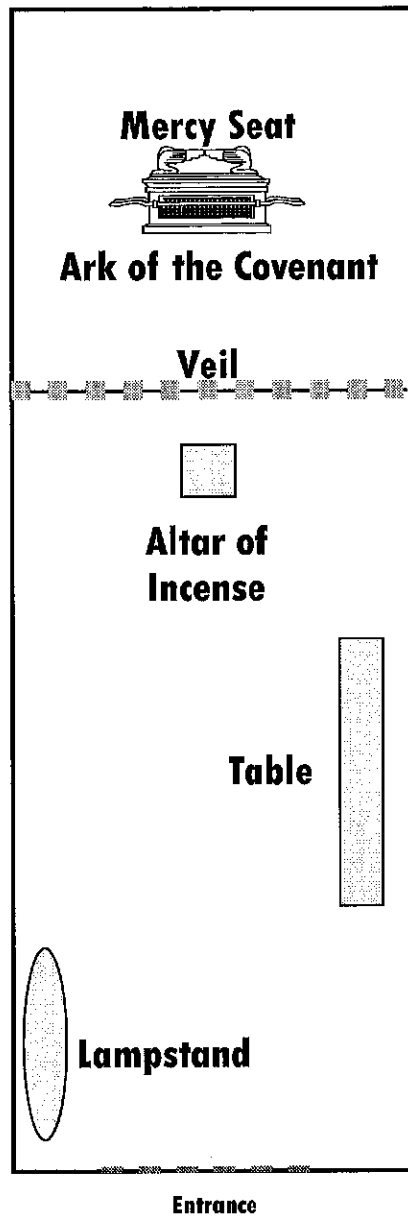
Review Isaiah 53:3-12

Visuals for Lesson:

- Bible.
- *In the Beginning...Jesus* poster.
- Resource Packet:
 - GOD—MAN visual (from previous lessons).
 - GOD'S JUDGMENT/GOD'S MERCY (from previous lessons).
 - TABERNACLE FLOOR PLAN (from Lesson 19).
 - TABERNACLE FURNITURE A-C (BRONZE ALTAR, WASH BASIN, LAMPSTAND, TABLE, ALTAR OF INCENSE, VEIL, ARK OF THE COVENANT, MERCY SEAT).
 - GOD'S GLORY, PEOPLE, PRIESTS, SACRIFICES, HIGH PRIEST.
 - GIRLS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO OPEN BOX.
 - JESUS IS THE KEY visual (from previous lessons).
 - Bible Clue Card #24.
- Magnifying glass (for use in reading the clue card).
- Large piece of paper—Use the visual on the next page to draw an outline of the tabernacle. Place the TABERNACLE FURNITURE on the outline, trace each piece, and then tape the furniture pieces under classroom chairs. This drawing is the TABERNACLE visual.
- Small box with a treat inside.

Floor plan of the tabernacle

(not drawn to scale)



**The
Most
Holy
Place**

**The
Holy
Place**

**The
Outer
Court**

 **Wash Basin**


**The
Bronze
Altar**

Lesson

Quickly review the following: **Display** the **GOD—MAN** visual from the previous lesson. Ask the children to recall the “seal” that was added to the visual in the previous lesson. [The Blood of the Covenant.].

Why was the blood important? Why did God seal His covenant with blood?

Explain that in this covenant God desired to make Israel His treasured possession. God gave Israel His commandments so they would know how they were to live as God’s special people. The Ten Commandments would show Israel what kinds of thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions were holy, righteous, and good, and therefore pleasing to God. But God’s law also showed the people of Israel that they were sinful and deserved God’s judgment—the right punishment of death.

God knew that His commandments could not make His people holy, righteous, and good. The people of Israel were sinners and needed their sins covered and forgiven. So God had mercy on them. But for sins to be covered, blood had to be shed—something had to die to show that God is right in punishing sin with death. What did God have His people kill instead? [Animals.] God accepted the blood shed from the animals as a substitute so His people’s sins could be covered. That is why He had the covenant made official with the blood. The blood of the animals didn’t actually forgive them, but it was a “clue” to what would forgive them.

Point out that we also learned about something very special that God told Moses to build. What was it? [The tabernacle.] **Display** the **TABERNACLE FLOOR PLAN**.

Why did God want the people to build a tabernacle?

Read **Exodus 25:8**:

And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.

Explain that the tabernacle was to be a little *like* a return to the garden of Eden where God would be very close to His people and have a special relationship with them. God would dwell and be present in the tabernacle in a very special way.

Because the tabernacle was to be a special place where God would be present with His people, how do you think He would want it to look? Should it be made of ordinary things? Should it be made of cheap things?

Activity: Tell the child that you are going to go on an imaginary tour of the tabernacle. The tabernacle is described in great detail in the book of Exodus. **Display** the large outline of the tabernacle that was previously drawn (the **TABERNACLE** visual) and instruct the children to look under their chairs. If they find a visual under

their chair, they should hold on to it until they hear it mentioned, at which time they should bring their piece to the front of the class and quickly tape it into place on the **TABERNACLE** visual. [Note: Because you want this portion of the lesson to go as quickly as possible, continue with the dialogue stated below while each child comes to tape their corresponding piece on the outline. You may want to have another adult available to help with this process. The "tour" of the tabernacle should take no more than five minutes.]

*Let's pretend we are beginning our tour now. The first thing we see as we approach the tabernacle is the outside wall. It is actually made of fabric curtains hung on posts. The wall is 75 feet wide and 150 feet long! Also, there is only one entrance to the tabernacle and it is 30 feet wide. Once we walk through this entrance, we are in the Outer Court. If we walk straight ahead, we will come to our first piece of furniture, a large, square altar made of wood and covered with bronze, a shiny metal. (Tape the **BRONZE ALTAR** on the outline.) Why do you think this would be the first piece of furniture?*

*After passing by the altar, we come to the second piece of furniture, a wash basin to wash in. (Tape the **WASH BASIN** on the outline.)*

Next, we walk forward and see the actual tabernacle. It is only 15 feet wide and 45 feet long. (Point to something in the room to give the children a concrete example of the width). It has walls and a roof. What do you think the walls of the tabernacle are made of? [Allow the children to guess.] Fabric curtains that were covered with animal skins and hides, hung between wooden poles. It looked like a giant tent!

*As we enter the tabernacle, we are now in the room called the Holy Place. If we stand still and look to our left, we will notice a light. What is the light coming from? A lampstand made of pure gold with seven holders that burn olive oil. The burning oil gives off a light similar to candles. (Tape the **LAMPSTAND** to the outline.)*

*There is also something against the wall to the right of us: a table (tape the **TABLE** to the outline). It is made of wood and covered with gold. And there is also something on the table—bread!*

*Now if we continue walking forward, we see right in front of us another altar—the Altar of Incense. (Tape the **ALTAR OF INCENSE** to the outline.) It is a small altar made of gold. What do you think that it is used for? [Burning incense that gives off a pleasant odor.]*

*Finally, just beyond the Altar of Incense is the entrance to another smaller room. The entrance is covered by a beautiful thick veil or curtain (tape the **VEIL** to the outline). If we open the veil and step inside, we can now enter*

*the most special and beautiful room of all—the Most Holy Place. In this room there is only one piece of furniture. It is the most important piece of furniture in the whole tabernacle. What is it? [The Ark of the Covenant.] (Tape the **ARK OF THE COVENANT** to the outline.) The Ark of the Covenant is a wooden box about this big (using your hands demonstrate a box that is about three feet long, a foot and a half wide, and two feet high) and was completely covered with gold. The Ark also has a special cover on it made of solid gold called the Mercy Seat (tape the **MERCY SEAT** on the outline). This is a very special room because God said that this is the room in which He comes down to be present among His people. It is in this room that God shows His glory—showing His awesome greatness, beauty, and worth! (Tape **GOD'S GLORY** above the **MERCY SEAT**.)*

Explain that this is the end of our virtual tour. The tabernacle was no ordinary building—but something beautiful, wonderful, and extraordinary. The tabernacle was a place for God's covenant people to come and worship Him and enjoy His presence.

But there is a problem with our imaginary tour. If we had been ordinary Israelites, living back in the time of this special tabernacle, we would have entered the outer court (point to this on the outline) and then our tour would be at an end. Why? Because if we tried to enter the actual tabernacle, we would die! The tabernacle was off-limits to sinful people. Sinful people cannot be in the presence of a holy God and live.

How could God's people worship God and enjoy His presence if they couldn't even enter the tabernacle? What could be done to fix this problem?

Illustration: Choose a girl to stand. Show her the box. Tell her that inside the box is a special treat just for her. Place the box on a table in the front of the room. Tape **GIRLS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO OPEN BOX** on the front of the box.

According to this sign, can [girl's name] open the box? Can she change herself into a boy? So that means the treat will be forever out of her reach or off-limits to her. Is there any way she could follow the rule and still get the treat? [Allow the children to respond. Choose a boy to come up, open the box, and give the treat to the girl.]

Point out that you could choose a boy to act as a *mediator*. A mediator is someone who acts as a go-between when two things are in conflict. The rule says that girls can't open the box. But a boy can open it and then give the treat to the girl. The boy can be the mediator between the girl and the treat.

God knew that sinners could not see and enjoy His awesome glory and live. That is the huge conflict or problem between God and His covenant people—His people are sinful but God is holy. So God chose certain men

*to be mediators. They were called priests. (Display **PRIESTS**.) Because this was a very special job, God commanded them to dress in a special way, to wash themselves in special ways, and be trained to follow very special, exact instructions. Day and night, year after year, they were to act as go-betweens between God and His sinful people. God decided that all priests must be men and must only be from the tribe of Levi.*

*God said that His sinful people were to come into the outer court. (**Display PEOPLE** and tape it within the outer court of the tabernacle outline.) They were to bring certain kinds of animals. They must then lay their hands on the animals and kill them with a knife in order to shed their blood. Then the priests (tape **PRIESTS** near the bronze altar) would place the dead animals on the bronze altar and offer them up to God as sacrifices (**display SACRIFICES** and tape it on the bronze altar) for the forgiveness of sin.*

Explain that the priests also had another important job. They were allowed to enter the Holy Place of the tabernacle and worship God. In doing this, they were entering the Holy Place on behalf of the people who were not allowed to enter—again, acting as go-betweens. God gave the priests very special instructions as to how they were to enter and what they were to do inside the Holy Place. The priests were to follow each instruction exactly as God said. If they disobeyed these instructions, they would die. But even the priests couldn't enter the Most Holy Place. It was too special and too holy. The most wonderful and beautiful place in the tabernacle was off-limits even to the priests.

Ask: Have you ever been kept out of someplace wonderful and exciting that you really wanted to enter? Why were you kept out? Was it too expensive? Was it too dangerous? How did you think it felt for the Israelites and even the priests to be kept out of the most wonderful place of all? How could God's people ever be truly happy if they could never enter the very place where God promised to display His beautiful and awesome glory? Could this problem be fixed also?

Display Bible Clue Card #24 and choose a child to come and insert it behind the red paper on the **JESUS IS THE KEY** visual to reveal:

Clue under Window # 23

Open the Window to reveal: **ONE HIGH PRIEST.**

Display the **HIGH PRIEST** and ask: *What is a High Priest? What did a High Priest do?*

Have the children turn in their Bibles to **Leviticus 16**. Explain that this chapter explains something called the Day of Atonement. It was the most special day of the

year for Israel. It came only once a year.

*God chose one man to be the High Priest. On the Day of Atonement, this man would have to follow God's instructions perfectly and then he would be allowed to pass through the thick veil and enter the Most Holy Place—into God's awesome presence. He would take incense with him and blood from an animal that had been killed. He would take the blood and sprinkle it on the Mercy Seat so the people of Israel could be forgiven and God would continue to dwell with them. (Tape the **HIGH PRIEST** within the Most Holy Place.) In doing this, the High Priest was acting as a go-between for God and His people. For only a few minutes, one time a year, the High Priest was allowed to experience the awesomeness of God's glory for the people.*

Do you think this might be frustrating for God's people? Why? Would you be happy if you were never allowed to be in the same room with your parents? Would you be happy if you could only enter into your parents' presence one time a year for only a few minutes? Do you think the people of Israel could be truly happy when God's special presence was kept off-limits?

Remind the children that we have not yet finished the story of the Bible. The tabernacle, the sacrifices, the priests, and even the one High Priest are all important clues in the solution to the mystery of Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus' death on the cross was meant to fix this problem perfectly and forever.

Application

- **WORKBOOK**—Have the children turn to Lesson 20 in their workbooks. Have them write in today's clue, One High Priest, on the notebook portion of the page. Have them follow the instructions for completing the rest of the workbook page. Why was the Most Holy Place so special? Why couldn't the people just go in the Most Holy Place and enjoy God's special presence there? Why is being in God's presence dangerous for sinful people? Ask: *How could something so wonderful—God's awesome glory—also be something dangerous? Can you think of things that are wonderful, but at the same time your parents or others say, "Don't touch," or, "Don't go there"? Do you think having God choose a high priest who could only enter the Most Holy Place once a year could fix the problem of God's people not being able to enjoy God's special presence? Do you feel like you have been excluded from God's presence? Why or why not? Has God made a way for you to be able to enter into His presence? How? Is there something in the future God has promised where His people will be able to enjoy His special presence all of the time? What will determine*

whether or not you are one of those people who will be able to “enter” into God’s presence so that you may enjoy Him forever?

- Ask the children if there is any place they would like to go but have not yet visited. Why do they want to go to this particular place? What is preventing them from going there? Ask the children to think back to the time of the tabernacle. Would the Israelites have been curious about what it would be like to enter the most Holy Place? Why were they kept out? In His mercy, what did God do for them? How was a priest a mediator—a go-between? How was the high priest different from other priests? Read about the Day of Atonement in **Leviticus 16:11-17**. Remind the children that this happened only once a year.
- Explain that the tabernacle of the Old Testament no longer exists, nor does any of the furniture that was in it. We no longer have priests who offer dead animals on an altar for the forgiveness of sin. Why don’t we do this in church? Can you think of anything in the Bible that shows us why these things no longer exist and why sacrifices are no longer done? Is it because we no longer need forgiveness for sin? Is it because God doesn’t want to dwell with His people anymore? Why then?
- Have the children recall the diagram and the furniture inside the tabernacle. Point out that different priests were to be in the tabernacle day and night. What kind of furniture might you expect to find there if you were to be in a place for a long period of time? [Something to sit on, a chair.] Were there any chairs in the tabernacle? Why not? [Allow the children to ponder this.] Point out that the job priests did had to go on day and night, week after week, year after year. It was a bloody job. How do you think the Israelites felt as they laid their hands on living animals and then had to kill them? How do you think the priests felt about having to place hundreds and thousands of dead animals on the altar day after day and year after year? What does this tell us about sin? Do you feel the terribleness of your own sin? Has the blood of something much more precious been shed so that sinners might be forgiven?

Send Home

- Parent Resource Page
- Review Sheet for Isaiah 53:3-12