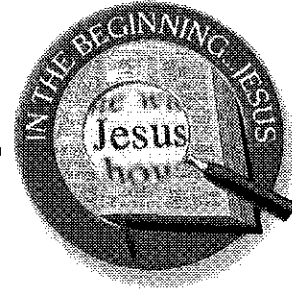


In the Beginning...Jesus



Lesson 36 Jesus: Great High Priest

Themes:

- The Old Testament appointment of a temple and priests was temporary, pointing to something much better—Jesus.
- The fullness of God dwells in the Person of Jesus.
- Jesus alone brings His people into the presence of God.
- Jesus is our great High Priest, the one Mediator between God and sinful man.

Scripture:

John 2:13-21; Colossians 1:19; Hebrews 5:1-3; 6:19-20a; 7:23-26; 9:24

Memory Verse:

John 1:16 (and review verses 1-15)

Visuals for Lesson:

- Bible.
- *In the Beginning...Jesus* poster.
- Resource Packet:
 - BABYSITTER, DAD & MOM, CANDLE, LAMP, FIRE, STOVE.
 - TABERNACLE, TEMPLE, PRIESTS, ONE HIGH PRIEST.
 - CLUE.
 - JESUS=GOD'S TEMPLE and JESUS: GREAT HIGH PRIEST.
 - FUZZY TELEVISION SET.
 - VEIL (from Lesson 20).
 - 2 CHECK MARKS.
- White board or large piece of paper and markers.

Lesson

On a white board or large piece of paper, make two columns labeled: GOOD and BETTER. Choose two children to come to the front. Hand each a picture: **BABYSITTER** or **DAD & MOM**. Point out that one belongs in the GOOD column and one belongs in the BETTER column. Have the children tape each under the correct column. [BABYSITTER=GOOD, DAD & MOM=BETTER.] Ask the class why Dad and Mom are better than a babysitter. Quickly repeat the procedure with **CANDLES** and **LAMP**, and **FIRE** and **STOVE**.

Explain that babysitters, candles, and fires are all good things. But they are used temporarily until something better is available. Point out that in the Old Testament God gave His people many good things. But some of these good things were only temporary until He gave them something better. Remove the pictures from under the GOOD and BETTER columns.

Display TABERNACLE. Ask the children if the tabernacle was a good thing. [Yes.] Why? What did God promise He would do in the tabernacle? [Dwell in it with His special presence for His people to enjoy.] Was the tabernacle permanent or temporary? [Temporary.] How do we know that it was only temporary? [God commanded Solomon to build a temple to replace it.] **Display TEMPLE.** Was it better than the tabernacle? How? Tape **TEMPLE** in the BETTER column. But did it last? Why not? [It was destroyed when Babylon came and captured Jerusalem.] So it was better, but it was not the best. Add a third column labeled, BEST.

Why isn't there a temple anymore? Why hasn't it been rebuilt since the time of Jesus? (Draw a "?" under BEST.)

Explain that as good as it was that God's people had a tabernacle and then a temple, they were only temporary. God had something much better for His people. God wanted the best for His people. What was the best?

Display CLUE. Explain that the clue hints at something better God had for His people—something that was the best! Give the children a moment or two to guess, and then have them turn to **John 2:13-20**:

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple He found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And He poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And He told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make My Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume Me." So the Jews said to Him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus

answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

These verses describe Jesus cleansing the temple. The Jews wanted to know what right Jesus had to do these things in the temple. How did Jesus respond? What did His response mean? If this temple was destroyed, would Jesus really rebuild it, stone by stone, in three days? Why were the Jews confused by this? Now read verse 21:

But He was speaking about the temple of His body.

Display JESUS=GOD'S TEMPLE and tape it under BEST.

How is Jesus better than the temple, a stone building? [Allow the children to respond.] Because Jesus is the real, living, eternal God and not a place, how is He best for God's people? [Allow the children to respond.]

Emphasize that the tabernacle and then the temple had been the place where God promised to dwell with His people. His special presence filled the Most Holy Place. But now that Jesus has come, the temple is no longer needed. Why?

Read **Colossians 1:19**:

For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

Explain that we no longer need to go to a stone building in a certain location (e.g., Jerusalem) to worship God and enjoy His presence. God's special presence no longer dwells just in a small room of a building. Through Jesus we can enter into God's presence and see God's awesome glory. He is God and is everywhere all the time. He is eternal and will never become old or weak or be destroyed. Jesus is the fulfillment of the clue that was given in the Old Testament. Tape a **CHECK MARK** on the picture clue: **GOD'S TEMPLE**.

Display PRIESTS. Ask the children if priests were a good thing. [Yes.] What good things did they do? [They acted as mediators or "go-betweens" for God and His sinful people. They offered sacrifices so sin could be forgiven. They were allowed to enter the tabernacle and temple on behalf of the people, etc.] Tape **PRIESTS** under GOOD.

*But what couldn't an ordinary priest do? [Enter the Most Holy Place.] Who was the only person who could enter the Most Holy Place? [The one high priest.] Why was the Most Holy Place such a special room? [The Ark of the Covenant was there. God promised to display His awesome glory there.] Tape **ONE HIGH PRIEST** under BETTER. But could the one high priest enter anytime he wanted? How often? [Once a year and only for a few minutes.] Why could he only enter for a few minutes, once a year?*

[Because God is too holy. Even the high priest was a sinner.]

Divide the class into two groups (e.g., boys and girls) and have a **Sword Drill** with the following: **Hebrews 5:1-3** and **Hebrews 7:23**:

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.

The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office.

According to these verses, why weren't the Old Testament priests the best thing for God's people? What were their weaknesses?

Illustration: Display FUZZY TELEVISION SCREEN. Ask the children if this is a perfect picture. Point out that a television screen will appear this way if there is something interfering with or blocking the television's reception. Point out that in a similar way, priests also had something that interfered with their reception—they were sinners. Therefore, they were not perfect "go-betweens." They could not give the people a perfect and clear relationship with God.

Display VEIL. Remind the children that the Most Holy Place was separated from the rest of the temple by a heavy veil. This was to remind the priests—even the one high priest—that they were separated from a holy God because of their sins. That is why even the high priest could only enter the Most Holy Place once a year, because he was a sinner, too.

Explain that the priests were good, and the one high priest was even better. But God knew they were not the best thing for His people. These priests were only temporary. They were sinners like all other people and could not be continually in God's holy presence acting on behalf of God's people. They were limited in their ability to act as "go-betweens."

So what would be the best kind of Mediator or "go-between"?

Have the children turn to **Hebrews 7:24-26**:

But He holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

Are these verses talking about an Old Testament high priest? What is different about this high priest? [His priesthood is permanent. He always lives. He is holy and without sin.] What does the word "intercession" mean? [To speak on someone's behalf and be their "go-between."] Who is this High Priest? Look at verse 22. [Jesus.]

Display JESUS: GREAT HIGH PRIEST and tape it under BEST. Point out that Jesus is God and is without sin. He is constantly in God's awesome presence. He lives forever to act as a "go-between." If you are trusting in Jesus as your great High Priest, it means He is ALWAYS acting on your behalf, bringing you near to God, bringing your prayers to God, and interceding for you.

Here is how the Bible describes how Jesus acts as the great High Priest:

Read **Hebrews 6:19-20a**:

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.

According to this verse, where has Jesus entered? [The inner place behind the curtain.] Where is that? Is it the Most Holy Place of the temple?

Read **Hebrews 9:24**:

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

What were the holy places made by human hands? [The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle and temple.] Are those the places Jesus the great High Priest enters into? [No.] Where has He entered? [Behind the curtain (veil). Heaven.] On whose behalf does He appear in heaven in the presence of God? [Ours.] Why is this good news for sinners? [Allow the children to respond.]

Emphasize that there is a very good reason why we no longer have human priests who act as "go-betweens" for us and God. God knew His people needed a perfect Priest—someone who could always act for God's people to bring them near to God. The Old Testament priests and high priests were only temporary until Jesus came to be the final High Priest. Jesus is the fulfillment of the clue given in the Old Testament. Tape a **CHECK MARK** on the picture clue: **ONE HIGH PRIEST**.

Application

- Discuss the meaning of the word “mediator.” It may be helpful to show some type of electrical adapter (e.g., a three-prong to two-prong adapter) and demonstrate how it works. The adapter acts as a type of “mediator” between one thing and another. Without the adapter there would be no way to “connect” the two objects. Why do people need a mediator to “connect” with a holy God? (See **Habakkuk 1:13a** and **Isaiah 59:2**.) How is Jesus a perfect Mediator? Read and discuss **Hebrews 2:17-18**. Why is it important that Jesus is faithful and merciful? (See **Hebrews 4:14-16**.) Why is it important that Jesus can sympathize with us? Why is it important that He never sinned? Why can people who trust in Jesus be confident? (See **Hebrews 7:23-26**.) Why is it good news that Jesus continues as High Priest forever? (See **Hebrews 9:24**.) Is He only allowed to enter God’s presence once a year? Why is He always in God’s presence? Do you ask Jesus to intercede for you? Do you believe He is acting, in heaven, on your behalf? In what ways? (Read **1 John 1:9; 2:1**.)
- Recall the story of Jesus cleansing the temple in **John 2:13-16** and His words in verses **19-21**. The temple Jesus cleansed in these verses no longer exists—it was destroyed soon after Jesus died on the cross and returned to heaven. It has never been rebuilt. Why is it good news that we no longer need to go to one certain PLACE to worship in God’s presence? How is having Jesus as our “temple” good news? If you want to pray in the middle of the night, do you have to get up and go to some special place? Why not? When you have sinned, do you need to travel to a certain place to be forgiven? Why not? (You might want to emphasize that worship is not about a place but a Person—Jesus.) Read **John 4:20-21, 23-24**.
- **WORKBOOK**—Have the children turn to Lesson 36 in their workbooks. In the notebook section, have the children write the two Old Testament clues Jesus fulfilled. Using the texts from **Hebrews 6:19-20a; 7:24-26; 9:24**, have the children write why Jesus is better than the Old Testament priests. Then write why Jesus is better than the Old Testament temple.
- Read and discuss **Hebrews 5:7-9**. Read portions of **John 17:1-26**. Why are these passages sometimes called Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer”? Who is Jesus praying for? What is He asking that His heavenly Father do for them? Does Jesus still intercede for His people? Read **Hebrews 7:23-25**. Do you believe Jesus is now interceding for you? Why or why not?
- Read **2 Chronicles 6:18-21**. Remind the children that these verses were spoken by King Solomon when the first temple in Jerusalem was dedicated. Read verses 19-21 again, but replace the words “this house” and “this place” with the word “Jesus.” (This could also be done with selected verses from **22-40**.)

- Read **Hebrews 6:19-20a**. What words are used to describe the hope we have in Jesus as our high priest? What is an “anchor of the soul”? What does it mean that Jesus goes before us? What does that imply? [That everyone who is trusting in Him will someday follow where He has first gone before us—to heaven!]

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