

# Lesson 4

## Jesus Christ, The Great High Priest

**Bible Lesson:** Leviticus 16:1-17; Hebrews 7:26-28

**Memory Verse:** "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" *John 1:29*

**Enrichment Memory Verse:** We have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. *Hebrews 8:1b*

**Catechism Memory Work:** And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

### TEACHER PREPARATION

#### Prepare to Teach:

- ✦ The student will understand that sin separates people from God and that they cannot face God until their sin is paid for and taken away.
- ✦ The student will understand the Old Testament priests' role of offering sacrifices to God for sins, and the special role of the high priest in offering the most important sacrifice on the Day of Atonement; the student will understand that these sacrifices pointed to the sacrifice of Christ.
- ✦ The student will understand that Jesus is our High Priest, Who made Himself the sacrifice to take away our sins when He died on the cross.
- ✦ The student will come to a knowledge of his/her own sin and will be brought to repentance and faith.

#### Prepare Materials:

*Along with the regular materials needed for class, you will need the following items for this lesson:*

- ◆ Drawings of the tabernacle or the temple showing the Holy Place and Most Holy Place as

well as the altar where the priests offered sacrifices, and a picture of priest offering a sacrifice.

- ◆ Quarter-long project materials (listed in Introductory section): for this, Lesson 4, have the students add onto last weeks message the following: "He ascended into heaven, and is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

#### Prayer Preparation

1. Pray that your Bible study this week will bring you a deeper knowledge of Jesus as your High Priest, Who gave Himself for your sins and lives to pray for you.
2. Thank God for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for each of your students.
3. Pray that your pupils will have Jesus revealed to them as the precious One Who gave Himself for them, that they may see Him and know Him and be led to assurance of their salvation.

### BIBLE BACKGROUND

#### A. Bible Study

In today's age many would discourage talking about blood; especially blood sacrifices. But the Old Testament people would quickly connect the work of a priest with the shedding of blood. The task of these priests was to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. It was a bloody and we might even say gruesome activity. But we cannot pass by the talk of blood being shed because of passages like Hebrews 9:22 which says,

“And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

The priest of the OT would offer sacrifices daily, on festival days, and even offer a sacrifice for themselves as they were offering one for the people. Our Savior Jesus did not need to make a sacrifice for Himself but made one sacrifice on our behalf and Jesus Christ made His sacrifice once for all. Hebrews shows this is superior in every way to the sacrifices made by the Levitical priesthood. He is the Great High Priest in the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7) who made a once for all perfect sacrifice for all our sins (Heb. 2:17).

After His sacrifice was offered and accepted (as proved by the Resurrection) our High Priest ascended into heaven. His enemies have been defeated at the Cross (Ps. 110:1) and He ascended to heaven to prepare a place for us (John 14:1-3). In Christ's ascension we also have the declaration that He has entered the presence of His Father as our advocate (Heb. 7:25, I John 2:1). Because our Savior has ascended we also need not be focused only on the material world around us but have our hearts drawn upward to Christ Himself. As it says in Colossians 3:1, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”

Jesus has finished His offering His sacrifice (although it has continuing consequences for all time) and has now been seated at the place of honor and authority, the right hand of God.

From there He continues to intercede for us as a priest according to Romans 8:34, “who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

We who confess the blood of Christ shed for our sins therefore have every assurance that we can approach God in prayer (Heb. 4:15-16). In prayer we have the privilege of thanking God that He has shed His holy and precious blood for us and each person that comes across our path. In song we also ask that God would continue to protect and intercede for us. The familiar Lenten hymn says, “Jesus, keep me near the Cross, There a precious fountain. Free to all—a healing stream, Flows from Calv'ry's mountain. In the Cross, in the Cross, Be my glory ever, Till my raptured soul shall find Rest beyond the river” (Ambassador Hymnal #71).

## B. Creed Study

As prophet, Jesus came to teach us the will of God concerning salvation. As High Priest, He secures our salvation by making perfect satisfaction for all the sins of the world, paying the price with His own blood on the cross (I Peter 1:18,19; Hebrews 9:14; I John 1:7, 2:2). Luther says: “The blood which flowed from the side of our Lord Jesus Christ is the treasure of our redemption, the payment and atonement for our sins....The same blood of Christ intercedes for us before God and cries to God without ceasing: Grace! Grace! Forgive! Forgive! Thus the blood of Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate, cries forever and ever without ceasing so that God the Father regards such crying and interceding of His beloved Son and is gracious to us poor, miserable sinners, Zechariah 9:11.”

The fact that Jesus paid for our sins is the very heart of Christian belief and the Biblical message of redemption. The catechism sums it up with the question, “What is Christ's work as High Priest? He offered up Himself a sacrifice for our sins, and ever prays for us.” (#162)

### *Atonement*

The High Priest was to make atonement for the sins of the people before God (Leviticus 16:1-22). As the Great High Priest, Jesus made atonement for us on the cross. Atonement means “to cover” a sin. The effect is to cancel or remove some obstacle that has broken a once healthy relationship. Something has to be done to appease the one who was wronged, and some conduct or course of action is required to restore the harmony that existed in a relationship before the break. It is our sin which has broken our once healthy relationship with God; we have sinned against Him. God requires blood (the life of the flesh) to cover, or atone, for sin and reconcile us to Himself (Leviticus 17:11). Jesus is the sinner's substitute, dying in our place on the cross (Isaiah 53:5ff). His blood covers our sin. This is called the “vicarious” or substitutionary atonement. As our substitute, Jesus made atonement for our sins by His suffering and death.

### *Reconciliation*

By making atonement for sin, the High Priest brings about reconciliation between God and the sinner. Atonement makes reconciliation possible. God was in Christ reconciling us to Himself (II Corinthians 5:18,19), while we were still enemies (Romans 5:10). Reconciliation puts away the hostility that separates two parties by removing the source of the quarrel. Christ died to put away sin. His blood covers it, and God is satisfied, thus reconciling the sinner to God.

Objectively, God reconciled man to Himself almost 2,000 years ago when Christ died on the cross. There the blood sacrifice was offered and accepted by God.

Subjectively, sinners are reconciled to God when they accept the atoning work of Christ on the cross for themselves. Christ's death does not save anyone until it is accepted and appropriated personally by faith (John 3:14,15). We must repent of our sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 16:31).

#### *Intercession*

Besides making atonement for sin and reconciling the sinner to God, the high priest is also to intercede for the people. A prophet speaks on behalf of God to men; a priest "speaks" or represents the people before God. Christ interceded for men while on earth (John 14:16, 17:9; Hebrews 5:6-10). However, Christ remains a priest forever, and now in heaven intercedes for the believer before God. He presents Himself to the Father on our behalf as one whose blood was shed for the sins of the world. He actually prays for us as one who sits at the right hand of God (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34; I John 2:1). This constant intercession of the exalted Savior at the right hand of God gives the believer the most certain assurance of his final salvation (Romans 8:34-39). There is nothing we in our sin and weakness can do but look to Jesus, and that is enough.

#### *The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1-22)*

This chapter describes the Day of Atonement when the high priest would make atonement for his own sins and for the sins of the people. He would do this by bringing the blood of the sacrifice into the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle, into the very presence of God. Just as Jesus' death on the cross is central to Christian theology and life, so the Day of Atonement was central to worship and the life of Israel. Here the high priest acts as mediator between the people and God and intercedes for them.

#### *Priestly preparation (16:1-4)*

Aaron was forbidden to enter the Holy of Holies "at any time" (16:2). It was not to be entered casually or at the will of man, but only at God's appointed time and in God's appointed way. In the Holy of Holies stood the most important sacred object in Hebrew worship, the ark of the covenant. The cover of the ark was the "mercy seat," or place of atonement. It was here that God's glory resided, it was here that atonement was made for sin. It was a place of meeting and communication with God (Exodus 25:22).

In preparation for his priestly work, Aaron was first of all to discard the priestly "dress clothes." The beautiful garments that reflected the dignity and honor of the office would not be seen at this time (16:4). Aaron himself was a sinful man and so clothes himself in white linen, a symbol of repentance for himself and the nation. He was also to bathe before putting them on. Such preparation, designating cleanliness and repentance, provides dramatic contrast between the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, emphasizing the need for repentance and forgiveness through the blood atonement.

#### *Selection of offerings (16:5-10)*

The proper animals had to be assembled for the sin offering for Aaron and the people, and for the burnt offerings (16:3,5,6). The bull would be a sin offering for Aaron and his household (16:6). The goats would provide for both sin offering and sin removal for the people (16:9,10).

#### *The sin offerings (16:9-22)*

This section explains the detailed ritual which is mentioned in summary in the preceding verses. First Aaron leads the bull to the altar of burnt offering, confesses his sin over it and then slaughters it (16:11). The animal was a substitute for Aaron and its blood would make atonement for his sins. Aaron takes the blood of the bull with him in a bowl. He fills his censer with coals of fire from the bronze altar where the sacrifices had been burned (16:12), then washes his hands and feet at the bronze basin in the courtyard. Now he enters the first room in the tent, the Holy Place, gathers incense there (16:12) and goes behind the veil into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of the Lord.

His first task is to sprinkle the incense on the coals so the holy room is filled with a cloud of smoke, obscuring the mercy seat. This prevents him from "seeing the Lord," thus preserving his life (16:13). Then Aaron takes the blood and sprinkles it on the mercy seat or atonement cover. After this he sprinkles blood seven times on the floor in front of the ark (16:14). All of this was to atone for his sins and for the sins of his household.

Returning to the door of the tent he finds the goats which had already been selected, and repeats the same process with the goat of the sin offering, this time for the sins of the people (16:7,15). Again he goes in and sprinkles the blood on the mercy seat and on the floor (16:16-19).

Now Aaron returns to the doorway of the tent to the second goat, the goat of removal, or scapegoat (16:8,20). This goat would live, but Aaron laid his hands on this goat and confessed over it all the sins of the people, after which it was sent off into the desert (16:10,21). In this way, this goat became the substitute who would carry away the sins of the people (16:22). This is a vivid picture of sin being removed, never to be seen again. God delights in being able to cleanse the sinner (make atonement) and remove his sin (Psalm 103:12; I John 1:7,9; John 1:29).

### *Christ our High Priest (Hebrews 7:26-28)*

The book of Hebrews presents Christ's high priestly work as no other book, with numerous references to the Old Testament levitical priesthood. Aaron and all the other priests were temporary (7:23), but Jesus is our perfect high priest who not only made satisfaction for our sins, but continues to serve (7:24,25).

Aaron and the priests were never holy in character; they were sinners like the rest of the people and needed to make atonement for their own sins first and then for the people (7:27; Leviticus 16:6). Jesus was holy, undefiled, innocent, separate from sinners and could offer up Himself once for all (7:27). While on earth, Jesus was a friend of publicans and sinners (Matthew 9:10; 11:19), but His contact with them did not defile Him. Today He is "separate from sinners" because of His position in heaven; but He is not "separate" from those to whom He ministers (7:25; 4:14-16).

This is the kind of High Priest we need. We are prone to sin daily, and always need to turn to Him for help. As High Priest, Jesus gives us the grace and mercy we need (Hebrews 4:14-16). He is our advocate at the throne of God (I John 2:1-2). If we confess our sins, He forgives and cleanses us and restores us to fellowship with Him (I John 1:7,9).

## BEGINNING YOUR CLASS HOUR

### Welcome

Visit with students as they arrive. Involve students in preparing the room. Ask about special events of the week.

### Open with Prayer

Call for ideas for prayers of thanks. Encourage students to pray sentence prayers related to these ideas. Ask for prayers of petition. Pray for the students' own attention and willingness to listen to Christ. Pray for friends and relatives with special needs; for missionaries.

### Recite Memory Work

Listen to students recite their memory work:

**From the Bible:** Hebrews 1:1-2a

And

**From the Catechism:** And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; . . .

### Review

Call for one or two students to recite Hebrews 1:1-2a together. Then call for the class to recite together. Ask for other favorite Bible verses. This recitation should be done rapidly so that student's attention and time is not lost.

Review Key Concepts of Lesson 3.

What was Jesus called in last week's lesson? (*The Greatest Prophet*) Why is He called a prophet? (*He brought us a message from God*) What is that message? (*The message of salvation: that Jesus died for our sins*) How can we listen to that message as God wants? (*By confessing our sins and trusting Jesus to take our sins away and make us God's children*) What happens if we're stubborn and refuse to listen? (*We miss God's gift of salvation; we are in danger of closing our hearts to Him so we will not hear Him speak to us.*)

### Introduce Wall Words

intercessors—

sacrifices—

atone—

Day of Atonement—

high priest—

sacrifice—

**Most Holy Place—**  
**Lamb of God—**  
**intercedes—**

## Introduce the Lesson

Direct the students to Lesson 4 in their books. Ask them to read the title of the lesson.

**ASK** What does this title tell us about Jesus? (*He is the Great High Priest*) Who knows what the priest did in Old Testament times and when Jesus was here on earth? (*They worked in the temple and offered sacrifices to God*) **SAY** Jesus didn't offer lambs and bulls on the Temple altars. He wasn't that kind of Priest. Our lesson will teach us what kind of Priest Jesus was and is.

## Teach the Lesson

*Peace offering*—A peace offering is a gift you offer or give to a person to make him stop being angry with you. Maybe you have done something wrong and your dad is angry with you. You might do something nice for him or give him a present so that he will stop being angry. You offer that present or do a favor for him, like cleaning up the garage. What you do or give him is called an offering. Because you want to make peace with your dad, we might call it a peace offering.

**SAY** Think of a time when you had disobeyed your parents and felt guilty about what you had done. You knew you had done wrong. You were ashamed and maybe afraid. Can you remember a time like that? Did anybody here bring something or something as a "peace offering?" (Allow students to share what they did or brought.) **ASK** Did you clean the house? Bring a present? (Allow time for answers.) Did your "peace offering" make your parents forget you were guilty? (*Probably not, if you had really disobeyed. Your parents would probably rather have you just ask for forgiveness.*)

**SAY** Everyone is guilty before God. Everyone has sinned by doing, saying and thinking things that break God's laws, the Ten Commandments. We think we should bring an offering to God to make Him forget we are guilty. **SAY** The first three paragraphs of the lesson tells what people in Old Testament times offered to God for their sins. Read the paragraph to find out. (If you have pupils who don't read well enough to read the student materials, you may need to have the lesson read aloud. Read parts in unison, parts yourself, and have students read aloud. Be sure to include all students in this reading. Carefully select portions for students who don't read well.) **ASK** What did God's people offer as sacrifices for their sins? (*Perfect animals*) **SAY**

The third paragraph tells about the special work of the high priest. The high priest, as we learned, was the main priest. Let's see what the high priest did. **READ** as the students follow along. **ASK** When did the high priest go into the Most Holy Place? (*On the Day of Atonement*) Who can find the Most Holy Place on the drawing of the tabernacle? (Ask a student to point it out.) How was the high priest dressed? (*In clean, richly decorated robes.*) What did he do? (*He prepared the animal for the offering and made the sacrifice.*) What two things did the priest make sacrifice for? (*His own sins and the sins of the people.*) What did the priests have to do to have God accept the sacrifices and prayers? (*Follow the exact direction He gave them about how to offer the sacrifices.*) **SAY** Now we come to the part of the lesson that explains how Christ is our High Priest. He is different from the High Priest who worked in the temple and offered animal sacrifices to God for the people. Jesus didn't do that. But He did offer something to God. He offered Himself to die on the cross for all the people of the world. Only the perfect Son of God could take the punishment for our sins. Since He offered Himself to God to save us and take away our sins, He is the perfect High Priest. Let's read the next paragraph to find some ways Jesus was a better High Priest than any other high priest. **READ** in unison. **ASK** What are some ways Jesus was a better High Priest? (*He was perfectly holy; He was sinless.*) Jesus took the place of the other priests so they weren't needed anymore. We don't have them in our churches. We have Jesus, our perfect High Priest who lives now and forever. **SAY** But now we see something amazing! Jesus is not only the High Priest, but He is the High Priest *and* the sacrifice. He offers the sacrifice for sin and He is the sacrifice. He offers Himself. Let's read and see if we can find a sentence that tells what kind of sacrifice He was. **READ** in unison. **ASK** What did you find? (Call on a student to read the second sentence. Give help only if needed.) (*Yes, He is the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.*) Remember that the Old Testament priests and high priests offered lambs as sacrifices for sin. **ASK** Could those lambs take away sins? (*No, only Jesus could.*) **SAY** But God paid attention to those sacrifices because the Savior, the real Lamb of God would die on the cross some day. When He died on the cross, His sacrifice took away the sins of all the people. **ASK** Did Jesus die for His own sin? (*No, He is holy. He had no sin to die for. He died for us.*) How do we know God accepted Jesus' sacrifice for sin? (*Because God raised Him from the dead.*) Jesus couldn't stay dead because He was perfect and holy and because He was eternal. Is Jesus still alive? (*Yes, He is in heaven where He*

*will be forever and will pray for us.)* Let's read from the Bible what God says about Jesus our High Priest. (Help the students to find Hebrews 7:26-28. **READ** verses 26-27 while they follow along.) Verse 27 says Jesus doesn't need to offer sacrifices for sins every day because He did that once for all when He offered Himself to die on the cross. Jesus gave Himself to die. He offered to do it. No one made Him die. **SAY** The last part of the lesson will help us know what good it does for us today that Jesus is our High Priest. **READ** the last paragraph for yourself to see if we can find how Jesus helps us. **ASK** What can you do when you have sinned and feel guilty? Do you have to make your own

peace offering? (*No. We can go to God in confession whenever we have sinned. We can ask Him to forgive us because He already offered Himself as the perfect offering for our sin.*) Will God forgive you if you tell God you are a sinner, but you know Jesus died for your sin and that you trust Him to forgive you? (*Yes, God will forgive you.*) **ASK** Then when God looks at you, will He see your sins? (*No, He will look at you and see you perfectly holy.*) Because He forgives you, He doesn't see your sins. He sees a perfectly holy heart. **ASK** When we pray, Who helps us? (*Jesus does. He is in heaven praying for us.*)

## APPLYING THE BIBLE LESSON

### Memory Work

**BIBLE VERSE**— John 1:29

*"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

Select a memorization technique to help the students memorize the verse. They should be able to recite it, without help, together with the reference, before they leave. They will still need to review it at home in order to retain it in their memory.

**CATECHISM**—**READ**

*... He ascended into heaven, And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead."*

**ASK** Where is Jesus now? (*Sitting on the right hand of God.*) What does that mean? (*He has all the power that God has.*) Where will Jesus come from some day? (*From His Father's right hand.*) Whom will He judge? (*The living people and the dead.*) He will bring those who have trusted Him to heaven. The ones who did not repent and believe will be separated from Him forever.

### Activity Pages

#### Activity 1—Our Great High Priest

**ANSWERS**

- 1) breastpiece, 2) ephod, 3) robe, 4) tunic (of checkered work), 5) turban, 6) sash,
- 1) gold, 2) blue, 3) purple, 4) scarlet
- "Holy to the Lord"
- 1) holy, 2) innocent, 3) undefiled, 4) separated from sinners, 5) exalted above the heavens

#### Activity 2—Do You Remember?

**ANSWERS**

1. sacrifice (c)

2. priest (f)
3. high priest (b)
4. Most Holy Place (i)
5. intercessors (j)
6. Day of Atonement (g)
7. prophet (a)
8. Gospel (e)
9. fulfilled (d)
10. ascended (h)

#### Activity 3—Cut Out Activity

Color the garments according to the following instructions. Then, using rubber cement, glue the figure of the priest and the stand onto heavy paper or an 80 lb. cover weight paper. Cut all pieces out and assemble according to the Bible references on the tabs.

*Coloring Instructions:*

Students should find Bible References as they color each piece.

1. Exodus 28:39; Exodus 39:27

*Tunic* - All priests wore a tunic. The tunic (sometimes called a brodered coat) was a long skirt of white linen with a distinctive pattern or checkered appearance.

2. Exodus 28:31-35

*Robe* - All blue, worn immediately under the ephod. The robe was sleeveless and longer than the ephod. On the edge of the robe were pomegranates in blue, purple and red (scarlet, crimson) with gold bells between.

3. Exodus 28:6-14

*Ephod* - was worn over the robe. V.6 - the ephod was made with a front and back piece of material fastened together on the shoulders by (v. 9) two large onyx stones (white and light red alternating

stripes or layers. Onyx is one kind of chalcedony, a precious stone.)

The Bible tells us the names of the sons of Israel should be engraved on the two large onyx stones.

The ephod was of gold, blue, purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen. There were also two gold chains over the girdle of white linen.

4. Exodus 28:15-29

*Breastplate* - also made of gold, blue, purple and scarlet material. It had four rows of precious stones according to the 12 names of the sons of Israel.

Row 1

*Ruby* - the real ruby is a red sapphire next in value to the diamond.

*Topaz* - Generally believed to be our modern chrysolite, a somewhat soft and translucent gem, usually of a pale green.

*Emerald* - Another precious stone of a pure green color.

Row 2

*Turquoise* - a sky-blue, greenish-blue, or greenish-gray semi precious stone.

*Sapphire* - of a blue color and transparent.

*Diamond* - white

Row 3

*Jacinth* - Red or more nearly orange variety of zircon.

*Agate* - a semi-precious kind of chalcedony with striped or clouded coloring.

*Amethyst* - precious stone of quartz of a blue-violet color

Row 4

*Beryl* - By the Hebrew word "tarshish", modern yellow topaz is meant. In Rev. 21:20 a different stone is probably referred to.

*Onyx* - One kind of chalcedony, a precious stone. It is in layers of different colors which alternate with each other, probably a light red and white. (for purposes here, students could color it red.)

*Jasper* - a variety of quartz and of transparent light and of different colors. The dark green kind of thought to be the variety of the Bible.

5. Exodus 28:36-38

Headdress, Turban or Mitre - Turban was of white linen and had a gold plate with the words, "Holy to the Lord" engraved on it. The gold plate was fastened on a blue or violet card. See Exodus 29:5. The plain turban of linen was worn by all the priests.

## CLOSING THE LESSON

### Closing Prayer

*Thank You, Jesus, for coming to die for us. Thank You for offering Yourself as the perfect sacrifice for all our sins. Take away our sins and give us Your perfect holiness. Thank You that You are praying for us. Work in our hearts so that we do confess our sins and trust in You. Amen.*

### Assignment

1. Assign today's memory work and review past memory work.
2. Remind students to take activity sheets home to finish them, review and share with family members and friends.