

The Tabernacle

Exodus 36:8-40:38

MEMORY VERSE

PSALM 84:1

“How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts!”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

One 9”x12” piece of white tissue paper for each child, two sheets per child of black construction paper, red, blue and purple tissue paper and white glue (not glue sticks).

A few towels, aluminum foil, kleenex and some objects that can be traced (such as coins or paper clips).

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Tissue Paper “Stained Glass Windows”

You will need one 9”x12” piece of white tissue paper per child for the “glass,” two sheets per child of black construction paper for the outside frame, red, blue and purple tissue paper (the same colors used for the curtains in the tabernacle) and white glue (not glue sticks).

Make two black frames to go in front and back of the “glass” by folding the black construction paper in half and cutting a rectangular hole (to discard) leaving about 1” around the edges. These can be stapled or glued together with the tissue paper inside.

For the colors, cut strips of red, blue and purple tissue paper about 2” wide, then take small stacks of them and cut small triangular shapes by making diagonal cuts. Just a small amount of paper will make lots of triangles. Lightly apply white glue on the white paper and then let the kids place the triangles to form any design they choose.

As the children are working explain how that God was very specific in His instructions for the design of the tabernacle. The workers were very careful to do it exactly as He instructed. What was built was very beautiful and many people worked very hard on it. Whenever God asks us to do something we should do our very best.

LESSON TIME!

Exodus chapters 35-39 record for us the making of the tabernacle. The tabernacle is just a fancy word for tent. God told Moses to build this tent in a very special way because it would be the place where God would dwell or live with His people. Then in chapter 40 we see the final preparations of the tabernacle and we also see the glory of the Lord filling His house.

Whenever you think of your house what do you think of? Most of us immediately think of the place where we live. We spend a lot of time in our homes and we like to be there. God desired to live among His people, Israel. It's hard to imagine God, as great as He is, desiring to come down and live in a tent like everyone else, but that is exactly what He did.

God wanted to live with His people. He loves to be with us. So God gave very specific instructions to Moses on what His house should be like. The tabernacle was the center for worship for the nation of Israel. However, the really wonderful thing is that the tabernacle is kind of like getting a camera and taking a picture of Jesus because so much of the tabernacle is a type (or picture or example) of Jesus. We are going to study about the tabernacle in today's lesson.

The tabernacle was an oblong structure, about 45 feet long, and 15 feet wide and high (about the size of a very small house). It was made out of wood, covered with gold, and put together with sockets of silver and brass. It was covered with three layers of animal skins. Inside, it had very costly curtains that were adorned with different symbols that were very beautiful and had a lot of

spiritual meaning. The outside of the tabernacle was made out of rough badgers' skins, to protect it from bad weather.

The Tabernacle itself was divided into two unequal chambers by large and thick curtains called the veil. The Holy of Holies was in the inner chamber and held the Ark of the Covenant. The other chamber, which was twice as large, was called the Holy Place. Surrounding the Tabernacle was another court, with an opening on the eastern side called the gate. Outside the gate was the camp of Israel, forming a square around the Tabernacle, three tribes on each side. This was a very simple structure, yet it was very beautiful. Every aspect of it in some way teaches us about Jesus.

We will also learn today that God doesn't dwell in a tent like He did in Moses' day. Today when we ask Jesus to come into our hearts He comes to live inside of our heart. Isn't that wonderful? The Bible refers to our physical bodies being like tents (2 Corinthians 5) and the Spirit of God dwells inside of us when we come to Jesus by faith. So this lesson is very important because it helps us to understand God's love for us and His desire to have a personal and close relationship with each one of us. **God dwells inside of His children.**

EXODUS 36:8

Then all the gifted artisans among them who worked on the tabernacle made ten curtains woven of fine linen thread, and blue and purple and scarlet yarn; with artistic designs of cherubim they made them.

Something really wonderful about the tabernacle is that God chose and called "gifted" artisans to work on it. Whenever God wants us to do something great for Him He is also going to give us the ability to do it. These men and women made some very beautiful things because God helped them to do it.

Notice how particular God was in His instructions, right down to the colors and the type of thread that they were supposed to use. Actually the colors were very important because they represented something about the nature of the Lord.

Blue usually represents heaven in scripture, so as you would enter into the tabernacle you would think of the dwelling place of God.

Next, you would see purple which is a picture of the royalty of God. Next, you would see the scarlet which is the color of blood which represents the suffering of Jesus as He shed His blood for our sins. The white curtains represent His purity and holiness.

EXODUS 36:19

Then he made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of badger skins above that.

The inside of the tabernacle was very beautiful but when you would look at it from the outside it wasn't so pretty. It was covered in ram skin (dyed red) and badger skins! Imagine the very place which holds the presence of God covered in badger skins.

It's pretty amazing how God doesn't seek out the fancy places for His dwelling place. After all, in the New Testament we read about how His Holy Spirit dwells in us! You can't get much plainer than that! In fact, the Bible says that we carry a treasure in us if we believe in Jesus, just like the "ugly on the outside" tabernacle contained the very presence of God on the inside (see 2 Corinthians 4:7). **God dwells inside of His children.**

EXODUS 37:1

Then Bezaleel made the ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits was its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height.

This is the Ark of the Covenant. It was a wooden chest about 4 feet long and 2 1/2 feet wide and high. The wood was covered in gold on the inside and outside so that you could only see gold. The ark was kept in the Holy of Holies. Inside of the ark was kept the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses, a pot filled with manna and Aaron's rod which budded.

EXODUS 37:6

He also made the mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits was its length and a cubit and a half its width.

The mercy-seat was a solid sheet of pure gold. The mercy seat sat right on top of the ark, kind of like a lid. The priest would sprinkle the blood of a sacrifice once per year onto the mercy seat for the forgiveness of sins for the people of Israel. It was a picture of what Jesus did once and for all on the cross when He shed His blood for our sins.

EXODUS 37:10

He made the table of acacia wood; two cubits was its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height.

There was a table in the Holy Place called the Table of Showbread. Every Sabbath (Saturday) they would put 12 fresh loaves of bread to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. This bread pictures Jesus, the bread of life (John 6:33). This also symbolized for the nation of Israel that they were constantly in His presence and reliant upon Him for all of their spiritual and physical needs.

EXODUS 37:17

He also made the lampstand of pure gold; of hammered work he made the lampstand. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and its flowers were of the same piece.

The lampstand had seven branches and it was filled with oil daily and never allowed to go out except for when the ark was moved. Jesus is also said to be the light of the world in the New Testament. He is a light that is always shining in this dark world.

EXODUS 37:25

He made the incense altar of acacia wood. Its length was a cubit and its width a cubit--it was square--and two cubits was its height. Its horns were of one piece with it.

The altar of incense was composed of acacia wood, again overlaid with pure gold. The priests would burn incense on the altar every morning and evening. Psalm 141:2 compares incense to prayer. In the New Testament we see that Jesus is forever making intercession for us, He is continually praying for us.

EXODUS 38:1

He made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood; five cubits was its length and five cubits its width--it was square--and its height was three cubits.

The altar of burnt offering was where everyone brought their sacrifices. It had a horn on each of the 4 corners and was covered in brass. Being the place where sacrifices were continually offered to God, it spoke of the cross of Christ. Jesus became the only sacrifice for our sins.

EXODUS 38:8

He made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the bronze mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

The laver was a big tub made of brass. It was filled with water. The priests were required to wash their hands and feet before entering the tent. The laver was made out of bronze mirrors, which is a

picture of God's Word. In James chapter 1 he speaks of the Word of God being like a mirror which will help us to see our imperfections and then be able to line up our lives according to His Word. It also speaks to us of the need of continual cleansing by His Word.

EXODUS 38:9

Then he made the court on the south side; the hangings of the court were woven of fine linen, one hundred cubits long.

The court was a picture of Jesus on earth "tabernacling" (or living) among men. Just as anyone could come into the court, Jesus is always available to anyone who seeks Him.

Metal Work

A lot of the work in the tabernacle was metal work. This activity will allow the children to get an idea of doing some metal work. You will want to bring a few towels (as a non-stick surface), get some aluminum foil, Kleenex and a few objects that can be rubbed through foil, but not too rough because it may tear the foil. Some examples are coins, keys, paperclips, textured fabric, cut out letters, salt or rice. You may also need some paper plates to hold objects such as salt or rice.

Lay out the towels on the floor. Set your objects on top of the towels (or on top of the paper plates for salt or rice). Then cover your index finger with a few layers of kleenex. Set the aluminum foil over the object and gently rub the foil with your index finger. The image of the object should appear in the foil. You can repeat with different objects.

Imagine Bezaleel doing all of that metal work in the hot desert; for him it was done as worship to the Lord.

EXODUS 38:21

This is the inventory of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the Testimony, which was counted according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest.

Now that the building was complete they took an inventory of everything used for the tabernacle. When they added up all of the gold used it was over a TON (2,000 pounds)! That's a lot of gold! The tabernacle actually was very expensive. All of the gold was given by the people. It was an act of worship from the people that helped to build the tabernacle. Also it is interesting to see that the Lord gave a lot of attention to detail. Everything was counted, weighed or numbered. The Lord desires us to be faithful with what He has entrusted us with.

EXODUS 39:1

Of the blue and purple and scarlet thread they made garments of ministry, for ministering in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

In chapter 39 the work of the tabernacle is finished. Notice how many times we read that all was done "as the Lord commanded Moses." It is wonderful to see how obedient the people were. In the things that God wants us to do we need to make sure that we are obedient.

The rest of chapter 39 explains the priests' garments. They have a lot of symbolism as well, but we won't have time to get into the details in this study. Again, every aspect of the priestly garments represents an aspect of the nature of Christ.

When they finished all of the work on the tabernacle Moses reviewed all of the work and gave his blessing. The work was

complete in about five or six months. Many people helped with the work and they worked very well together. This all made the work go faster and easier.

We can learn about the work which the Lord has given us to do in this story. He has called each of us to His work, and we must be faithful in that work, doing it as unto Him. We should pray and ask the Lord what He would have us to do in our service to Him. What gifts and talents has the Lord given to you for service to Him? He has a plan for our lives and wants us to use His gifts and talents for His service.

EXODUS 40:34-38

Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

When the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys.

But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up.

For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

In chapter 40 we see that Moses finished his work. Everything had been dedicated to the Lord and then we see here that God comes and fills the tabernacle with His presence. The cloud was a symbol of the Lord's presence. As the cloud lifted, the people would travel.

If it stayed over the tabernacle and was not lifted from above it, the people did not travel.

There is so much that we can learn from the building of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle itself. We see God's desire to dwell with His people and of course, we also learned that He now indwells us who are believers in Jesus Christ. **God dwells inside of His children.**

We also learned that God is concerned with the smallest detail. Every aspect of His work is important. Also His word, the Bible, is sufficient for everything that we will ever need. We can see a glimpse of how much God does love us and cares about every little thing in our life. What an awesome God!

Meet Me There

Play a variation of 20 questions. Have a place picked out in your mind that you want your class to guess. For example, you may be thinking about the hot desert where Moses and the children of Israel were or a deserted island in the middle of the ocean. Keep it simple so that the children can guess.

Next, have the children sit in a circle and take turns asking you a question about this place. Keep going around the circle until the place is guessed. You can do this 2 or 3 times with the final place to be the place that you wish to "meet" them.

After you have played this game, make the point to the children that God never makes us guess where to meet Him or how to find Him. The people of Israel knew that the Spirit of God dwelt in the tabernacle. He now lives in the hearts of His people and we can meet with Him anytime we want to. We should meet with Him often and continually. What a privilege it is to serve such and awesome God!

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for their salvation and for the fact that God wants to dwell in His children. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.