

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. The result of the people's hard work was beautiful and created an awesome picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. When 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. It was to be the place where God would dwell or live among His people. God wanted to dwell among His people--He loves to be with us. The tabernacle would be the center for worship for the nation of Israel. In chapter 40, we see the final preparations of the tabernacle; and we see the glory of the Lord filling His house.

God gave very specific instructions to Moses on what His house should be like. Much of the tabernacle is a type (a picture or example) of our Lord Jesus Christ and His work on our behalf.

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 adorned with different beautiful symbols that 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 simple structure, yet beautiful. Every aspect of it in some way teaches us about Jesus.

Today God does not dwell in a tent like He did in Moses' day. Today, when we ask Jesus to come into our lives, He comes to live inside of our heart. How wonderful to think about! The Bible refers to the physical body of a Christian as being like a tent (2 Corinthians 5) with the Spirit of God dwelling inside. **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.

God chose and called "gifted" artisans to work on the tabernacle. God desires to use us for His glory. He will "gift" us (enable us) to do whatever He has called us to do.

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

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

Next, one would see purple, a picture of the royalty of God. Then, scarlet, the color of blood representing the suffering of Jesus as He shed His blood for our sins. The white curtains represented 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 beautiful; however the outside was not so pretty. It was covered in ram skin (dyed red) and badger skins! Imagine the very place that holds the presence of God covered in badger skins!

God does not seek out fancy places for His dwelling place. After all, in the New Testament, we read that His Holy Spirit dwells in us! You cannot get much plainer than that! The Bible says we who believe in Jesus carry a treasure in our “earthen vessels.” Though unattractive on the outside, we, as the tabernacle, house the very presence of God. (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, 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 dwelling in God's presence. This bread pictures Jesus, the bread of life (John 6:33). It also symbolized the total reliance and dependency of the nation Israel on God to provide their physical and spiritual 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. The Bible says, Jesus is light of the world, shining in the darkness. It also represents God's people staying plugged into Jesus. As we abide in Him, staying connected, the Holy Spirit fills us with light and life.

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 (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 the people 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 complete and perfect sacrifice for our sins. Once and for all, the Bible says, by the shedding of His blood, Jesus Christ purchased our salvation. Hebrews 10:10 states: "...we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

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, a picture of God's Word. In James, chapter 1, he speaks of the Word of God being like a mirror that will help us to see our imperfections and

then be able to line up our lives according to His Word. The laver also speaks to us of our need to be continually cleansed by God's 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

Much 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; yet he did it to worship and honor 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. The people had donated gold in worship to the Lord. As they took inventory, they found all of the gold used was over a TON (2,000 pounds). That's a lot of gold!

It is interesting to see that the Lord gave a lot of attention to detail. Everything was counted, weighed, or numbered. God is blessed as we give and sacrifice to Him. Nothing we give goes unnoticed by Him.

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." The people were obedient, responding in worship to the great God who loved them. May our response to God be worship and obedience.

The rest of chapter 39 explains the priests' garments. The priest's garments have much symbolism as well. Every aspect of the priestly garments represented an aspect of the nature of Christ and His work in His people. It is not possible, however, to cover the details in this lesson.

When the people finished the work on the tabernacle, Moses reviewed all of the work and gave his blessing. So many had helped and worked well together that the tabernacle was complete in about five or six months.

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.

The work was complete, and the people dedicated the tabernacle to the Lord. Then, God came and filled 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. Now, He dwells inside us who believe in Jesus Christ. **God dwells inside of His children.** As we consider the "gifted" artisans, we are reminded that God has gifted and called

each one of us. He desires to use us for His glory. May our love for Him cause us to use our gifts for His glory and follow His instructions completely. And, we are reminded, as we study the tabernacle and the beautiful picture it creates, of the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

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 two or three times with the final place to be the place that you wish to “meet” them.

After you have played this game, make this point: 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. May we meet with Him often, “continually.” What a privilege it is to serve such an awesome God!

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for the work of Christ on their behalf and the awesome truth that God wants to dwell in His children. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.