

Building God's House

(Exodus 20:3-6; 31:18; 32; 34)

Introduction

Can you imagine making a house beautiful enough for God to live in? I wonder what kind of a house God could live in? How big do you think it would have to be? How would you decorate it?

Opening Prayer

Father, we look forward to coming to heaven and seeing you face-to-face and seeing the beautiful place that you live. We know from the Bible that heaven is a wonderful place; no more tears, no sadness, the streets are paved with gold. But our little human minds cannot begin to really get hold of the magnificence of Your glory that we will behold. Help us to listen with our hearts today as we learn about how Moses built you a house out in the wilderness. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

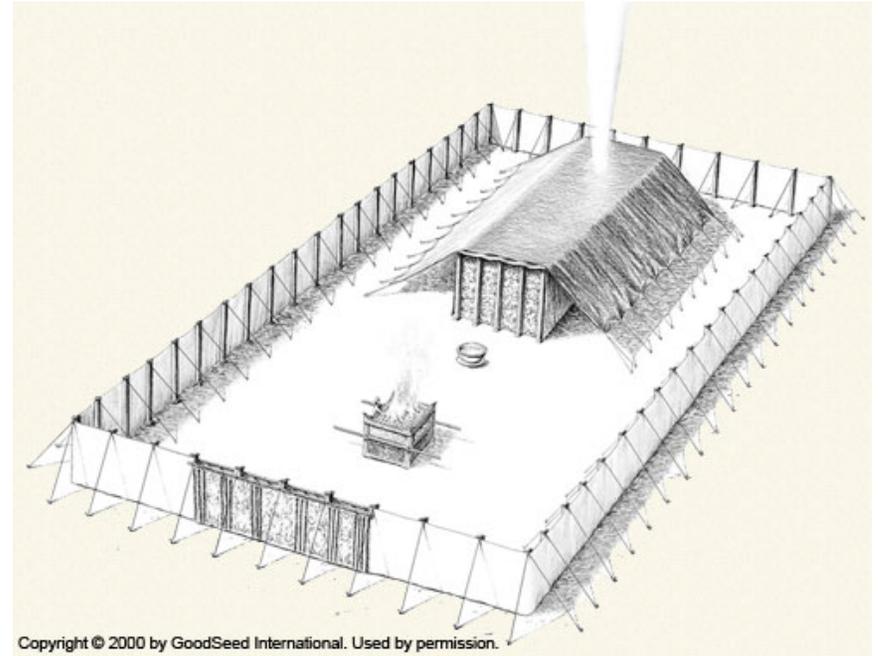
Memory Verse

Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. (Exodus 25:8)

Lesson

The Ten Commandments wasn't the only thing that God gave Moses up on Mount Sinai. Moses was up on the mountain for 40 days and God gave him lots of other instructions. God gave Moses exact instructions for building the tabernacle—a dwelling place for Him and a place to keep the ark. The tabernacle was to be a beautiful place where God could reveal himself to his people.

The people were blessed to supply the building materials that God required including rare and beautiful fabrics, precious metals like gold and silver, precious jewels, special wood, and animal skins. God used the talents of His people as they constructed the exact design Moses received on Mt. Sinai. Its design was simple.



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The tabernacle and its furnishings have many lessons for us.

[Teacher, describe the features of the tabernacle twice: first just explain each feature, then go over them again explaining the significance they have for Christians.]

A Fence of White Linen

The tabernacle was surrounded by a fence made of white woven hangings. That's why the people also called the tabernacle, the "Tent of Meeting" or just the "Tent" because it was built in such a way that it could be taken apart and carried with them wherever they went on their journey.

The tent poles were carved acacia wood covered with gold. The curtain hooks were loops of blue and gold fasteners. This created the *Outer Court*.

The white linen fence was the first thing you saw when you came to the tabernacle. The white linen reminds us that we need to have our sins forgiven before we can approach God.

Psalms 51:7

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Only One Gate

There was only one entrance into the tabernacle. They called it *The Gate*.

This reminds us of Jesus:

John 10:9

Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures.

Jesus is the only way to get to God.

John 14:6

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

The Brazen Altar or Altar of Burnt Offering

Upon entering the gate, the first thing you came upon was the *Brazen Altar* where you burned an animal offering.

The Altar was made out of wood, covered with bronze and it was set up on a mound of earth. The wood is a picture of the cross and bronze in the Bible always stands for judgment. This is a picture of Jesus lifted up on the cross where He took the judgment for our sins.

John 1:29

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Jesus is the Lamb of God!

The Laver

The people could only come into the Outer Court to burn their animal sacrifice at the Brazen Altar. Only the priests went beyond the Bronze Altar to the *Laver*.

The Laver was a large bowl filled with water where the priests washed their hands and feet before entering the *Holy Place*. It was made of bronze and lined with mirrors so you could see your reflection in the water.

This is like the Word of God. When we look into God's Word it shows us what we are really like on the inside. When we see God's perfection in His Word, we become aware of just how far we miss the mark.

Romans 3:23

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

What should you do if you sin? How do you get clean again?

1 John 1:9

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

After washing their hands and feet at the Laver, the priests could enter the Holy Place.

The Holy Place

Inside the court yard was another tent that had two rooms inside of it. The first room was called the *Holy Place* and the inner room was called the *Most Holy Place*. The whole thing was covered with animal skins to protect it from the sun and rain. Some people think they might have used the skin of dolphins or seals from the Red Sea.

There were three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place: the Golden Lamp Stand, the Table of Showbread, and the golden Altar of Incense.

The Golden Lamp Stand

The *Golden Lamp Stand*, also called a Menorah, was a seven branched candle holder. It was filled with oil every day and never allowed to go out except when the tabernacle was being moved.

The Golden Lamp Stand reminds us of Jesus:

John 8:12

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

Jesus is the light of the world that never goes out!

Table of Showbread

Once a week on the Sabbath, the priests baked twelve loaves of bread and put them on a table in the Holy Place called the *Table of Showbread*. At the end of the week the priests removed it and ate the old loaves right there in the Holy Place, and then put the freshly baked bread on the table.

Who does the bread remind you of? Jesus!

John 6:35

Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

The bread also speaks of our need for spiritual food.

Matthew 4:4

But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

We depend upon God's Word for our spiritual food. When we have communion and eat the bread, we remember that Jesus is the bread of life!

The Altar of Incense

The *Altar of Incense* sat in front of the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. God commanded the priests to burn incense on the Golden Altar every morning and evening. The incense was to be left burning continually throughout the day and night as a pleasing aroma to the Lord.

The incense was a symbol of the prayers of the people going up to God.

Revelation 5:8b

... they held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of God's people.

The smoke from the burning incense is a picture of our prayers going up to heaven. Our prayers smell good to God.

Most Holy Place

The *Most Holy Place*, also called the *Holy of Holies*, represents heaven itself, God's dwelling place. The High Priest was the only one who could enter the Most Holy Place and he could only go in there on one special day in the year. Anyone else who tried to enter it would die.

Hebrews 9:7

But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.

The High Priest went into the Most Holy Place to meet with God and ask Him for forgiveness for the people.

Jesus is our High Priest!

Hebrews 4:14

So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe.

A priest is anyone who represents God to people and presents people to God – a "Go Between". You and I are called to be priests.

The Veil

A *Veil* or curtain separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Women spun special threads out of gold and embroidered cherubim or angels using bright colored thread.

The veil represented the Lord's body which was broken for us. The moment Jesus died on the cross, God tore the veil from the top to the bottom.

Mark 15:37-38

Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Through Jesus, every believer can now enjoy direct access to God.

Hebrews 10:19-20

And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By this death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.

Ark of the Covenant

Inside the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant. It was a box that contained the stone tablets on which God had written the Ten Commandments, a pot filled with manna, and Aaron's rod.

Mercy Seat

The lid to the Ark was called the Mercy Seat. Every year, the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place and sprinkle blood from a bull onto the Mercy Seat. God promised that when He saw the blood, it would cover over man's sin.

Hebrews 9:22

In fact, according to the law of Moses, nearly everything was purified with blood. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

Before Jesus came and shed His blood for us, the high priest had to come in and do this every year using animal blood. But animal blood wasn't satisfactory. Jesus' blood has covered over our sins permanently.

When the tabernacle was completed, God blessed their handiwork by covering the tent with a cloud and filling the sanctuary with His glory.

Closing Prayer

Father, we stand in awe of You for designing the tabernacle out there in the wilderness with so many signs pointing to Jesus. Jesus didn't even come on the scene for many hundreds of years, but you knew before the foundations of the world that we would need a Savior. Thank You for your wonderful plan to save me from my sins. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Make tabernacles out of shoe box lids:

- Paint the edges of a shoe box top white to represent white linen curtains that enclosed the outer court.
- Copy the Tabernacle patterns onto colored construction paper. Use yellow for the various pieces of furniture, purple for the Holy Place tent, and red for the roof of the Holy Place and the veil.
- Inside the shoe box lid create the Holy Place using the purple construction paper tent walls. Cut them out and fold on dotted lines.
- Fold a long side of the veil piece about ¼ inch over tooth picks and glue in place to make the curtain entrance between the two rooms. The curtain will hang on the purple Holy Place tent walls.
- Have the children cut out the furniture pieces along the dotted lines leaving a long "tail" to fold under to glue or tape in the appropriate places.
- Have them label the Ark of the Covenant, The Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place or draw people or animals, as they wish.

Game Center

Use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

1. What were the leaders of the tabernacle called? (Priests)
2. Name two of the three pieces of furniture that were placed in the Holy Place. (Lamp stand, Table of Showbread, and Incense Altar)
3. What piece of furniture was placed in the Most Holy Place? (Ark)
4. What piece of furniture was placed in the courtyard of the tabernacle? (Bronze Altar and Laver)
5. What piece of furniture contained the Ten Commandments, manna, and Aaron's rod? (Ark of the Covenant)
6. What piece of furniture burned oil to light the holy place? (Lamp stand)
7. Where did the priests offer incense every morning and night? (Incense Altar)
8. Where did the high priest sacrifice the animals? (Bronze Altar)
9. What was used for burnt offerings? (Bronze Altar)
10. What piece of furniture held 12 loaves of bread that represented the 12 tribes of Israel? (Table of Showbread)
11. What piece of furniture had a mercy seat with two golden angels on it? (Ark)
12. Where did God's presence dwell? (The Most Holy Place)
13. Where did Moses meet with God? (Mt. Sinai)

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