

Unit 5, Session 3: Building the Tabernacle

Big Picture Question: Why do we need to be saved? People are sinful and cannot save themselves.

Memory Verse: 1 Samuel 2:2 – “There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.”

Christ Connection: God told Moses and the people to build the tabernacle so that He could dwell among them. We no longer need a tabernacle because those who trust in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection have been given the Holy Spirit so that God lives in us, not merely near us.

Bible Passage: Exodus 35-40

Find the passages together in your Bibles and read through them together. You could also read the paraphrase of all these passages below in blue. For younger kids, you may want to just read the bolded portions.

The purpose behind God’s interactions with Israel has consistently been to establish a relationship with his people. Everything God has done is so that people might know him, including giving instructions to build the tabernacle. God intends to dwell among his people, to tabernacle with them. “Tabernacle” is the same root that the phrase “Shekinah Glory” comes from. The verb “shekinah” means “dwelling” and refers to the majestic presence or manifestation of God which has descended to “dwell” among men. “Tabernacle” is simply the same term in the form of a noun and the space in which God intends to manifest his presence for the sake of communing with his people. This space is representative rather than restrictive, since God does not need the tabernacle to hold his presence (Is 66:1-2; Jer 7:3-11; Acts 17:24). Instead, the tabernacle is for the sake of the people. It’s a visible, physical meeting place that protects the unholy from the holy, even as the people are invited to meet with God through a mediating priest. There are sacred spaces like this all throughout Scripture and they have more to do with relationship and Sabbath rest in the Lord than tent poles and curtains.

There is a reason Moses reminds the people of the command to observe the Sabbath in Ex 35:1-3 just before the instructions for the tabernacle are given. The heart of the people should always be to seek after and love God (Dt 6:5). The spaces and rituals established by God for communion are important, but they were always intended to be observed with hearts of love for the Redeemer. The Sabbath, time for remembering God’s work and focusing on relationship, is closely tied to sacred meeting space. After Christ comes, those who place their faith in him become living temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19-20; 2 Cor 6:16). Followers of Christ become the sacred space for meeting with God. God tabernacles with us as his Holy Spirit dwells in us. What took place in the tabernacle before the Israelites was representative of what now takes place in us because of Christ’s mediation on our behalf.

While the Israelites were still at Mount Sinai, **God commanded Moses to build a tabernacle. It would be a place for God to dwell among His people.** God told Moses to invite all the Israelites to be a part of this building project.

First, Moses invited the Israelites to give their money and their possessions so that the tabernacle could be built. The people gave gold, silver, and bronze. They gave blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. They gave goat and ram skins and fine leather. They gave precious, beautiful gemstones. **The people were so generous that Moses had to tell them to stop giving because they had far more than they needed!**

Next, Moses requested for people with the special skills of building, sculpting, weaving, designing, and decorating to come and help with the tabernacle and all its special furnishings. Many artists came to give their time and their talents, and **God's spirit filled a man named Bezalel to lead the construction and design of the tabernacle. God also gave a man named Oholiab the ability to teach others how to design, weave, cut gems, and more.**

Bezalel, Oholiab, and many other artists worked hard on the tabernacle. They made huge curtains to be the walls of the tabernacle. **They made a special box, called the ark, and overlaid it with gold. The ark had a special seat called the mercy seat with two cherubim at each end. The mercy seat was where the high priest would sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed animal to ask God for forgiveness of sins.** They made a gold table, a gold lampstand, two altars, and a bronze basin, or bowl. These items would be used in the worship of God.

They also made special clothes for Aaron and the other priests to wear. Aaron's garments included a special breast piece that had twelve different gemstones on it—one for each of the twelve sons of Jacob. **These clothes could only be worn in the tabernacle and would show that Aaron and the priests were set apart for a special work of God.**

Moses inspected all the work that had been done. He saw that everything had been done just as the Lord had commanded. Moses blessed the people and then set up the tabernacle. Once it was completed, **the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Wherever the people traveled, the cloud of the Lord stayed with the tabernacle during the day, and there was fire inside the cloud at night.**

If you or your child have questions about what it looks like to follow Jesus in salvation or baptism, Pastor Sam would love to talk with you! Please feel free to contact him at ssiever@lenexabaptist.com.