



# 11

# Worship in the Tabernacle

## Key Themes

- God reveals His character in the Bible.
- God provides salvation from sin through Jesus.

## Key Passage

- Leviticus 16:11–22

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Connect the objects in the Tabernacle to Jesus Christ.
- Describe how the Old Testament sacrifices made day after day differ from the sacrifice Jesus Christ made for sinners.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

Write on the board, "How does the Tabernacle point to Christ?"



### Studying God's Word

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The items God prescribed for the wilderness Tabernacle provide a symbol, or shadow, of what was to come in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The sacrificial system that God ordained for the Israelites was insufficient to cover sin. However, the perfect sacrifice of the only perfect one, Jesus Christ, was completely sufficient to cover all sins once and for all for everyone who would believe in Him.

Study the Prepare to Share section.

Go Before the Throne.



### Activity: The Tabernacle

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Students will examine the text to identify the details Moses received concerning the construction of the Tabernacle, and how the articles in the Tabernacle point to Jesus and His perfect sacrifice.

Print one The Tabernacle worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

Print one Tabernacle Complex from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.



# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Read Exodus 25–31; Hebrews 7:26, Hebrews 10:1–14. As you prepare for this lesson and read the text, consider the holiness of God as He delivered the instructions for His dwelling place on earth with men and the atonement He offers for sin through Jesus Christ alone.

When God gives details, we should take notice. And in this account—the construction of the Tabernacle—God is all about details. In fact, it is so detailed that this is one of those sections of Scripture that people tend to skip over because of the “boring details.” But why did God include such explicit detail? These rigid directions reveal that God dwells with men according to His plan and purpose. He is absolutely changeless and holy. He knew how He wanted to be worshipped and He would not tolerate any other form. This dwelling place, with all its furnishings, was to be built according to all that God revealed (Exodus 25:9).

Some of the items included in the Tabernacle are worth mentioning here. The table of showbread was to be set outside the Most Holy Place. On it would be 12 loaves of bread—representing the 12 tribes of Israel. These were to be set before the Lord each Sabbath and eaten by Aaron and his sons in a holy place (Leviticus 24:8–9). We can easily see that this bread also pointed toward Jesus Christ, the bread of life (John 6:35).

The golden lampstands (made of pure gold) stood across from the table of showbread. These lamps were fueled with olive oil and burned continually (Exodus 27:20). The priests certainly needed light within the Tabernacle—but we also see that this unextinguished light points to our Lord and Savior, “the light of the world” (John 8:12).

The most important piece of furniture commissioned by God was the Ark of the Covenant—the

gold-covered chest that would find its home within the Most Holy Place. The Ark would house the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant (Hebrews 9:4). It was covered by the mercy seat (Exodus 25:17), and God would speak to the priest from above the mercy seat (Exodus 25:22) over the Ark. On the Day of Atonement, the blood of the sacrifice would be sprinkled on the mercy seat to make atonement for the sins of Israel (Leviticus 16:15–16).

The picture here should take our breath away as God reveals His plan of redemption. Can you picture God above the mercy seat (Exodus 25:22) looking down at the Ark housing the Law that could never be obeyed (Romans 3:19–20), knowing that because of His holiness He must demand perfect obedience? And then, once a year—on the Day of Atonement—the blood was sprinkled, according to the Law, onto the mercy seat and God saw the sin offering presented, which provided a temporary covering but could never take away sins (Hebrews 10:11). What a wonderful foreshadowing of Christ’s sacrifice offered once for sins forever (Hebrews 10:12).

The building of the Tabernacle, far from being boring, offers us hope and reminds us that by one offering—Jesus Christ—God has perfected those who are being sanctified (Hebrews 10:14).

## APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

God’s instructions for the objects used in the Tabernacle included an interesting building material—acacia wood (Exodus 25:5, 25:10, 25:13, 25:23, 25:28, and others). The acacia tree was used throughout the Tabernacle—but most significantly it was what the Ark itself was made of. The acacia tree was covered with sharp thorns. Thorns are a constant reminder of the Curse announced in the Garden after sin entered

the world (Genesis 3:18). The Curse is real. As the workmen prepared the articles for the Tabernacle, they would have had a constant physical reminder of the presence of sin.

And this tree was what God specifically wanted used to house the Law He had given to Moses on Mt. Sinai—the Law that could never be obeyed perfectly; the Law that humbles man to the knowledge of his own sinfulness (Romans 3:20).

Can you see the picture? The Ark made from the sin-cursed, thorn-covered tree, housing the Law that could never be kept, doused with the sacrificial blood every year before the mercy seat for atonement of the sins of the people. What an amazing foreshadowing of God's plan of redemption through Jesus Christ—who would shed His blood once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous (1 Peter 3:18) as the propitiation for the sins of all who would believe (1 John 4:10).

We are surrounded by real reminders of the Curse and sin every day. But we can find joy and hope in the promise God has given us through the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Tabernacle was intended to be a temporary structure until Jerusalem was established as the capital of the Israelite nation. It was used during the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the desert and was replaced by Solomon's Temple 400 years later.

Houses of worship and temples were quite common at this time in history. Many cultures had temples dedicated to their pagan gods. These were often situated on mountains or high hills because the people believed that this would bring them nearer to their gods. This practice of pagan worship on the mountain

tops explains the command of God to the Israelites as they entered into the Promised Land to destroy the high places that were established to worship Baal and other false gods (Numbers 33:52; Deuteronomy 12:2).

God was very precise in His directions for both the Tabernacle and the Temple. Today, however, because of Jesus Christ our Savior—Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23)—we do not look to a temple to worship in, but we worship God in spirit and truth wherever we are (John 4:19–24). Jesus is the cornerstone of the church, which now grows together throughout the world into a holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:21). In fact, the apostle Paul makes it clear that we are the temple of the living God and God has made His dwelling among us (2 Corinthians 6:16). Because of this, we should endeavor to live in humble worship and praise to our holy God in all we do—consistently reflecting His glory throughout our lives.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



## BEFORE THE THRONE

Oh dear Lord, I thank you for the foreshadowing of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. Help me to realize that the entire Bible is about your redemptive plan in Christ. And as I study more, allow my eyes to see Jesus Christ my Savior in every passage. Father, I pray that my students will realize the significance of the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made—the only perfect sacrifice sufficient to take away sins once and for all. Bring them to the realization of their own sinfulness and then allow them to see Jesus for the wonderful Savior that He is.

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





## Review

In our last lesson, we looked at the giving of the Law to the Israelites. We saw that movies and dramatic presentations of these events have problems, and we were reminded that we always have to look to Scripture as our absolute authority.

**?** What were the three ways God communicated His Law to the Israelites?

*He spoke directly to them (Exodus 20:1, 22), He spoke commands to Moses which were then told to the Israelites (Exodus 19:14–15, 25), He recorded the information Himself or through Moses (Exodus 24:4, 12)*

However, the Law was not given to make the Israelites righteous or that they could be saved through obedience. It was given

to demonstrate the holiness of God and their inability to obey it perfectly apart from God's grace. Paul made it clear in his writings that the Law was to show us our need for a Savior—we can never be justified by doing the works of the Law.

We are going to see another example of the holiness of God and the way the Old Testament constantly points forward to the coming of Christ. Just like obeying the laws could not make the Israelites righteous, the sacrifices that they offered in the Tabernacle were not sufficient



## Studying God's Word

*The following activity, along with the second part, will take the majority of the class time. Depending on how much time you have, you may have to select a few items to focus on.*

- Write on the board, "How does the Tabernacle point to Christ?"
- Students should turn to page 81 in their Student Guides.



# The Tabernacle (part 1)

## MATERIALS

- The Tabernacle worksheet for each student
- Tabernacle Complex image

## INSTRUCTIONS

Have the students work in groups of 2 or 3 to identify the details of the construction of the Tabernacle and its articles of worship. After the Israelites had been at Sinai for a while, as we discussed last week, Moses made his first of two 40-day trips up the mountain to meet with God. During that visit he received the tablets which he later broke upon finding the Israelites worshipping the golden calf.

While he was with God, he also received instructions for the civil government of the new nation and instructions for the building of the Tabernacle and the methods of worship. Pass out the worksheet.

If finished early, encourage them to read any study notes or commentary they might have in their Bible.

Today, we are going to spend time looking through these passages in groups and using the text to describe the construction of the Tabernacle and some of its articles. On the worksheet, you can see the blank column titled “Description.” That is all you are going to fill in for now and we will look at the last column later. In 10 minutes or so, we will come back together and look at what you learned.

## CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

- As you read through the descriptions, what stood out to you? Many who have not studied this topic will likely be surprised at the level of detail,

including the size, colors, and materials to be used in the construction.

There are many other details about the incense, the oil to be used for the anointing, the garments for the priests, and other things that we didn’t look at. God set out the plans in a very specific way.

Where did the supplies to make the Tabernacle and its articles come from? Much of it came from the jewelry and other things the Egyptians gave the Israelites as they were leaving. In essence, God had provided the materials for Himself by causing the Egyptians to give their wealth to the departing slaves.

What type of wood was to be used for the construction of several of the articles? Acacia wood.

Acacia wood is an interesting choice. The various types of acacia in the Middle East are covered with thorns. God chose to use a plant that would have reminded the people, especially those preparing the wood, of the Curse He had placed on the creation. The crown of thorns that would later be placed on Christ’s head was likely from this same tree, with thorns that could be several inches long.

As you read about the artists and workmen, what was notable about their description? Both of the men who were to lead had been called by name—chosen by God. They had been filled with the Spirit by God to accomplish His tasks. The gifts they had were from God and would be used to glorify Him.

Which attributes of God that we have talked about are on display? His independence is demonstrated in giving the resources and talents to build the Tabernacle. His holiness is demonstrated in the exactness He commanded in worshipping Him.



## READ THE WORD

One of the primary purposes of the Tabernacle and its articles was to offer sacrifices to God. There were many sacrifices and duties that happened on a daily basis and we don't have time to detail all of those today. We are going to look at one of the most important of those offerings. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, was set in the seventh month and was a day of national significance. Let's read Leviticus 16:11–22 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

## EXAMINE THE WORD

The rest of the chapter goes on to explain the ritual washings and changing of garments that were to take place.

### Observe the Text

- ?
- Who is offering the sacrifices? *Aaron, the High Priest.*
- ?
- What is the purpose of the incense carried behind the veil? *To provide a cloud of smoke to conceal the priest from God's presence, lest he die.*
- ?
- What is to be done with the blood of the bull? *Aaron is to sprinkle it on the east side of the mercy seat of the Ark seven times using his finger.*
- ?
- How is the purpose of the goat that was offered different from the bull's purpose? *The bull was for the sins of Aaron and his household while the goat is representative of the sins of the entire nation.*
- ?
- What was to happen to the second goat? *The sins of the people were placed on it in a symbolic way and it was released into the wilderness to take the sins of the people outside of the camp.*
- ?
- How often was this to be repeated (see 16:34)? *Every year.*

### Discover the Truth

Now you know where the idea of a scapegoat comes from and the basic idea of Yom Kippur. The blood of the bulls and goats was a temporary covering—or atonement—for the sins of the Israelites. God demanded a very exact method of offering Him worship and to cover the sins of the people.

Again, this exact nature and the constant covering of the sins should remind us that because God is perfectly holy, He must judge the sin of every person He has created. Even in these temporary sacrifices, He was showing His grace and mercy and pointing forward to what the Messiah would come to accomplish.

HOLY





# The Tabernacle (part 2)

## MATERIALS

- The Tabernacle worksheet for each student

## INSTRUCTIONS

As we read from the Old Testament about the Tabernacle and the sacrifices that were offered there, we can see that there was a sense of incompleteness; there were always more sacrifices to make. Constant sacrifices had to be offered on behalf of both the priests and the people.

Let's go back to the worksheet we started earlier. We are now going to fill in that last column to help us understand some of these connections. Read the New Testament passages referenced there and see if you can make a connection between the articles and practices of the Tabernacle and their fulfillment in the New Covenant with Christ.

*Have the students complete the column titled "Connection to Christ/New Covenant."*

## CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let's look at each of these and give a summary of the connections you found.

Hebrews 9:6–15 talks of the entrance into the inner part of the Tabernacle, where the Ark was found, as a symbol of what Jesus would fulfill through His sacrifice.

In John 6:35, Jesus refers to Himself as the bread of life, just like the manna was given to sustain the 12 tribes, represented by the 12 loaves that were to be made each week (Leviticus 24:5–9).

The lamp that was to be kept lit continually in the Tabernacle typified Jesus as the light of the world (John 8:12).

As Hebrews 8:4–5 explains, the Tabernacle and its services were a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. Jesus now fulfills all of those roles as the High Priest in the heavenly Tabernacle.

As Hebrews 10 describes, the offerings on the altar were a reminder of sins and could not remove sin, only cover it temporarily. All of these pointed to Christ, who offered Himself once for all—a single, perfect sacrifice to remove the guilt of sin for all believers.

The outer court was to provide an area of separation, but Christ has removed that separation (Ephesians 2:14) and everyone who is in Christ can have direct access to God.

The Altar of Incense constantly burned and rose before the Lord. This was a type of the prayers of the people of God that are described as being mixed with incense in the heavenly sanctuary in Revelation 8:3–4.





# Applying God's Word

## WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

I hope that you have a bit of a sense of awe at the incredible detail that God gave for constructing the Tabernacle and worshipping Him in it—and we have skipped a lot of those details. As we reflect on the daily sacrifices and duties, as well as the yearly sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, it should give us great joy to know that all of those things have been fulfilled on our behalf by Jesus. He is our High Priest who offered the perfect sacrifice once for all. It was not a sacrifice of an animal, but a sacrifice of the very Son of God—fully human, fully divine—whose blood is absolutely sufficient to completely remove the penalty for sin for all those who trust in Him.

If that does not cause you to rejoice, I do not know what would. We serve an awesome God and have the privilege of knowing and worshipping Christ, who has completely fulfilled the demands of God's holiness and justice.

## GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? What part of our study today can you meditate on this week to help you appreciate the holiness of God even more? *Discuss various answers.*
- ? How has your understanding of the role of the Tabernacle and the sacrifices changed as we looked at the text today? *Discuss various answers. Many people may not have known that the articles and practices of the Tabernacle and the Temple pointed forward to what Christ would do in His life, death, and Resurrection.*
- ? As we study Scripture, why is it important to compare Old Testament passages to New Testament passages? *We often gain a much fuller understanding of what happened in the old by looking at the new, or vice versa. As New Testament believers, we can find thankfulness and joy in looking at what we are no longer required to do since Christ has fulfilled the functions of the Tabernacle and the sacrifices. We can serve Him in holiness without all of the ritual.*

- ? The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Jesus must constantly be re-sacrificed in the ritual of the Mass. How is their thinking similar to the Tabernacle sacrifices? What passages could you use to show them the false thinking in that system? Not unlike the daily sacrifices, every time a Mass is performed, there is a sacrificing of Christ, and so the work is never finished. Hebrews 8–10 makes it clear that Jesus offered Himself once as a perfect sacrifice that does not need to be repeated as those in the Tabernacle needed to be. Christ's work is finished and His sacrifice was completed 2,000 years ago.
- ? What information have you learned today that would allow you to share the gospel more fully with someone from a Jewish background? Making a connection between the constant sacrifices to cover sin and the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ can help them understand what the temporary sacrifices were pointing toward—the true Messiah. Using the Day of Atonement or Passover imagery, you can connect the penalty for sin to the death and Resurrection of Jesus.



### MEMORY VERSE

**Exodus 20:1–5a** And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.”



### GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for the Old Testament that points to Jesus Christ.
- Thank God for the only one whose sacrifice is good enough to take away the sins of everyone who would believe in Him—Jesus.

# Notes